

THE BULGE: 70TH ANNIVERSARY SPECIAL EDITION

BATTLE OF THE BULGE

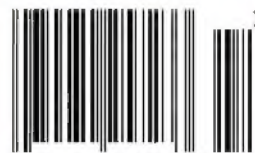
WINTER WAR 1944-1945



**Americans in the
Battle that Halted
Hitler's Last Blitz**

**War in the Ardennes • Bastogne
Tank Battles • Malmedy • Infiltrators
Operation Stösser • St. Vith**

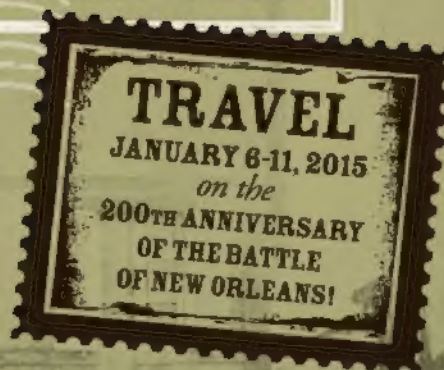
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BATTLE OF THE BULGE

WINTER WAR 1944-1945

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from
THE FAMOUS



*Somewhere in
Germany!*

COVER SHOT: Behind the ice, snow, and fog of the coldest winter Belgium had ever known, and beneath all the layers of clothing a shivering GI could find, America's fighting men buckled down to win the Battle of the Bulge. They were men like Private First Class Lloyd G. Taylor, seen here taking a break from carrying his .30-caliber heavy machine gun through the snow. National Archives

THIS SPREAD: Private First Class Robert L. Thompson sent this 2nd Division holiday card home just before the Battle of the Bulge broke out. He would end the battle as a POW. See his story on page 90. Robert L. Thompson. Courtesy of LifeReloaded.com

BATTLE OF THE BULGE

WINTER WAR 1944-1945

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Misery for Victory

BACK IN THE DAYS BEFORE polyester thermal fleece, Dad always told me wool was the way to go in cold weather. If you got wool wet, he said, it would still keep you warm. It would hold on to your body heat so you wouldn't die of hypothermia.

I wore my share of winter wool growing up, much of it from uniform supply shops on military bases while I was still an air force dependent. Dad was right, it kept me warm. But it also itched, and was pretty heavy.

Today, we wear windproof shells with layered, moisture-wicking fleece liners that don't itch. We can go into bitter-cold weather with safety, comfort, and a full range of motion. We can stay warm and dry without much effort or expense.

Imagine, then, being in the wild forests of eastern Belgium and Luxembourg in the winter of 1944, the coldest Europe had ever known. You're living in a hole in the icy ground. And you're wearing non-waterproof leather boots, cotton thermal underwear, an ordinary wool uniform, perhaps a sweater or an Ike jacket (or both), and a heavy wool overcoat. Maybe you throw a rain poncho over it all.

Aside from the fact that you were nearly immobilized by the bulk, you were still cold, and cutting winds occasionally still found their way all the way through to your skin. Your wool clothes kept you warm enough to survive, but you were wet, itchy, chilly, and miserable. And you weren't changing your clothes much, either, because you were in the middle of a life-or-death battle that lasted for about a month and a half.

To cap it off, you were often eating the same foods day after day, packaged rations rather than fresh-cooked food. Christmas came and went without much opportunity to celebrate.

That's the way American troops along the German border went through the Battle of the Bulge. They marched through snow and slop. And the snow and ice that lined their fox-holes melted whenever the interior got warm enough, keeping their feet wet all the time.

Horrible things happen when your feet never get dry. Cold makes it all the worse. Countless men were sidelined, some permanently, because of trench foot and frostbite. And although the army did try to get as many pairs of galoshes and shoepacs as it could to GIs in the Ardennes, distributing new supplies during an epic battle (especially sized footwear) was no small task.

This backdrop of discomfort persisted throughout the grueling battles inside the Bulge at places like Bastogne, St. Vith, Elsenborn Ridge, Wiltz, and elsewhere. GIs lived like survivalists while toting mortars and heavy machine guns, operating tanks and guns, moving rocket batteries around through the woods, and more. Look at the photos in this issue, and you'll sense the soul-burdening strain of this critically important battle.

It truly was critically important. It was the free world's answer to Adolf Hitler's last wild attempt to get away with the aggression and oppression perpetrated by his Third Reich. Stopping his great counteroffensive in the Ardennes meant stopping him and his regime.

To all the men who fought for survival and victory in the Bulge, I offer my humble but sincerest thanks, admiration, and outright awe.

Jim Kushlan
Publisher/*America in WWII* magazine

BATTLE OF THE BULGE

WINTER WAR 1944-1945

INTRODUCTION

Setback at Germany's Gates



NATIONAL ARCHIVES

American infantrymen advance into the Hürtgen Forest in the fall of 1944.

THE WESTERN ALLIES CRASHED ONTO France's Normandy beaches on D-Day, June 6, 1944, and hung on for dear life. June dragged into July, and just when it seemed that the greatest expeditionary force in history might languish inside its beachhead, a new offensive achieved a breakout. By the end of July, the Allies had moved deeper into France. August brought a fresh landing, on Southern France's Riviera. With the Russians closing in from the East and the Western Allies pushing inland from the Atlantic, Adolf Hitler's Thousand-Year Reich seemed to be running out of days.

Throughout the summer of 1944, Americans advanced through Normandy's bocage, rooting out enemies hedgerow by hedgerow. Near the end of August, a mixed American, Canadian, British, and Polish force encircled and captured much of German Army Group B around Falaise, France.

With little to hold them back, the Western Allies advanced eastward toward Germany itself. By September, Americans had crossed the Belgian border into Germany near Aachen, and on the 19th they began a battle in the Hürtgen Forest, with the unstated goal of capturing dams on the Roer River. If the Germans decided to blow those dams, the resultant flooding could keep the Americans from reaching the Rhine River, final safeguard of Germany's heartland. Farther south, in Luxembourg, Americans were lined up along the German border near Echternach and Trier, awaiting the order to advance.

With such success and momentum, the Americans had reason to feel confident as winter approached—even if the fighting in the Hürtgen Forest was starting to look much harder than the US First Army had expected.

But something the Americans couldn't predict was about to happen, courtesy of the wild card that was Hitler. As Führer, the former WWI lance corporal had direct control over military decision-making, and over generals with years of military education and experience. Some of those generals had initially supported Hitler for his emphasis on restoring their nation's pride after the humiliation inflicted by the Treaty of Versailles at the end of World War I. Now many of them winced at his decisions.

In December 1944—six months after a cabal of officers tried but failed to blow up the Führer—Hitler ordered a counteroffensive in Belgium's thickly wooded Ardennes, over the objections of his generals. The plan consisted of a surprise thrust straight at and through the Allied line. The thrust would continue all the way to the North Sea port of Antwerp, thereby capturing a major Allied supply inlet, and splitting the enemy force in two while inflicting heavy casualties. Such a setback, claimed Hitler, would cause the United States to back away from the war in Europe. Great Britain would sue for peace.

As commander of Army Group B, Field Marshal Walther Model was assigned to execute Hitler's Ardennes offensive. He had argued with the Führer, saying the operation was too grandiose for the resources at Germany's disposal. Model should have had Hitler's ear. After all, his defensive tactics had turned the Battle of the Hürtgen Forest into a slaughter of US troops, more than 30,000 of whom would be killed or wounded by December 16, the day the Ardennes Offensive would begin.

But the Führer had made up his mind. Model did what he was ordered to do. But privately, he gave Hitler's Ardennes plan a 10 percent chance of success. ★

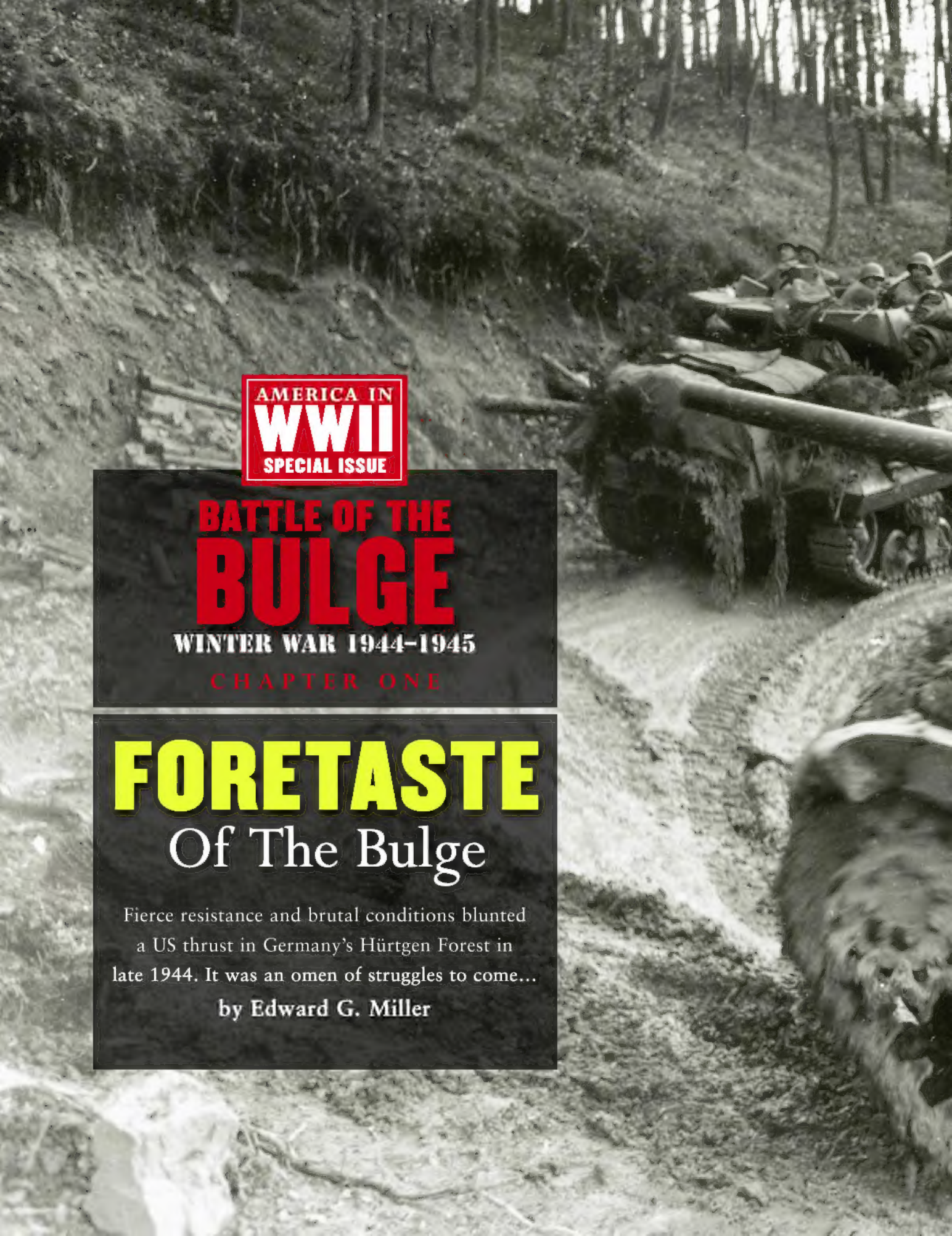


**BATTLE OF THE
BULGE**
WINTER WAR 1944-1945
CHAPTER ONE

FORETASTE
Of The Bulge

Fierce resistance and brutal conditions blunted
a US thrust in Germany's Hürtgen Forest in
late 1944. It was an omen of struggles to come...

by Edward G. Miller





CHAPTER ONE • FORETASTE OF THE BULGE



THE AMERICANS MARCHING ACROSS GERMANY'S WESTERN BORDER in the fall of 1944 might have guessed on sight that the dense forest before them could quickly turn into a patch of hell. All that was needed was fire and suffering. They would come.

"My recollection—of one of my men who died from an artillery shell that tore off the top of his head or of another man who died when a large chunk of red-hot shrapnel created a hole the size of my fist...", wrote infantry lieutenant William L. Devitt, recalling the horrors he encountered when his unit entered the northern reaches of the thick, hilly Hürtgen Forest east of Aachen, Germany. It was some of the hardest close combat the US Army experienced in the entire war. The view from the other side of the battle line was similar. A German non-commissioned officer described one firefight as "hand-to-hand combat, tanks burning..., loud noise of duels between men armed with Panzerfausts and tanks..., burning and exploding tanks, men falling everywhere...."

The American memory of World War II places the intense and brutal fighting in the Hürtgen Forest well behind the infamous combat on Omaha Beach on D-Day and in the Battle of the Bulge. Yet both German and American veterans of multiple fights in the 1944-1945 European campaign consistently recall the forest fighting as the worst they ever experienced.

GIs entered the 10-mile-wide, 20-mile-long forest in mid-September 1944 after pursuing the German forces across northwest Europe. Geography, politics, and strategy had put the US First Army on a collision course with a remarkably resilient enemy that was working desperately to shore up its defenses. As clear summer skies gave way to an overcast, rainy autumn, the Americans persisted in attacking directly into some of the worst terrain and strongest defenses in all the Rhineland. It was an offensive that stripped away every US advantage in artillery, armor, and air support.

Such reckless tactics might have been excusable had the objectives warranted it. But here, controversy remains even after nearly 70

years. Why did the Americans persist in reinforcing failure when all the Germans needed to do to win in the Hürtgen Forest was hold on?

Records prove no US general knowingly ordered fruitless operations, but the outcomes of their decisions in the forest campaign were fruitless nonetheless. In focusing on destroying the German army, the generals overlooked the key to reaching the Rhine River west of Cologne: the dams on the Roer River. The Americans had to cross the Rhine to crush the Third Reich, but to reach the Rhine they had to cross the Roer. They could not safely do so,

however, without first neutralizing a series of flood-control dams that set the Roer's level. If the Germans controlled the dams, they could release flood waters and pin down any US forces who had crossed to the German side, trapping them against the rising river.

The Hürtgen Forest shielded the all-important dams, but American generals continued operations there for nearly three months without specifically designating the dams as an objective. Early on, not even the leadership of German Army Group B understood the dams' value.

Crises usually result from a chain of decisions.

Sensibly enough, Allied supreme commander General Dwight D. Eisenhower did not want to lose the initiative his forces had gained after the invasion of France in the summer of 1944. In late August, he ordered his armies to continue their advance without waiting for resupply. That couldn't continue for long, however, so to establish supply routes, Eisenhower had to put capturing English Channel ports in France and at Antwerp, Belgium, ahead of the destruction of German forces. So he ordered Lieutenant General Omar N. Bradley, commander of the US 12th Army Group, to weight his attack north of Belgium's densely forested Ardennes region and thereby support the British attack on Antwerp.



Previous spread: Troops ride 3rd Armored Division tank destroyers up a muddy road in Germany's Hürtgen Forest in November 1944. The advance is part of a US 12th Army Group effort to pierce the forest, cross the Roer River, and reach the Rhine. Tangled woods, impassable roads, and dug-in enemy firepower will turn the assault into a bloodbath. Opposite: Battery A, 18th Field Artillery Battalion, fires rockets in the offensive. Above: GIs died in Hürtgen Forest for three months before generals identified their real objective: the Roer River dams. Here, a view from Schwammenauel Dam. Top: The 78th "Lightning" Division was the first infantry unit sent to attack the dams, in mid-December.





A succession of orders sent the two forward corps of the group's First Army toward the Roer and the city of Aachen and, by default, the Hurtgen Forest. The two corps—the V Corps, under Major General Leonard T. Gerow, and the VII Corps, under Major General J. Lawton Collins—reached this area too exhausted and short on supplies to exploit the situation. Fuel and ammunition were scarce. Inaccurate projections of casualties had left them with an excess of some military specialists and a shortage of others, particularly riflemen. It did little good to fill openings in infantry units with untrained men who were not physically ready for combat. Combat veterans generally thought themselves better off in undermanned units with trained soldiers than in full-strength units loaded with men who weren't able to do their jobs properly.

Collins's VII Corps was the first to experience hard fighting. Collins had wanted to get his corps through the Siegfried Line (as the Allies called Germany's *Westwall* defensive line) at Aachen before attempting to capture the city. Keeping the initiative and momentum were vital, given the weakened enemy. To do that, the corps needed to secure the

limited road network in its zone of attack to support operations that were planned beyond the Roer. Lieutenant General Courtney Hodges, First Army commander, approved Collins's request for his two infantry divisions, one armored division, and thousands of supporting troops to continue operations into the forest without waiting for resupply.

Gerow, whose V Corps operated on the right of the VII Corps, opposed making the attack. But Hodges's orders made sense at the time, because nearly all intelligence reports referred to the German forces as weak. The Americans, however, had underestimated Germany's ability to replenish their combat power quickly. It was a misjudgment they would regret. German commanders threw every unit they could find into the line to stop a tank and infantry task force from the 3rd Armored Division in the forest's northern reaches.

Unable to concentrate their own combat power, the Americans could only gradually draw up to the Siegfried Line. No written American order or plan in September had considered the broader need to control the Roer dams. It was only in October that intelligence officers and engineers first brought the





matter to the attention of senior commanders, and it appears that overconfidence blinded the generals, who persisted in focusing on roads and towns instead of the river and its dams

MEANWHILE, IN LATE SEPTEMBER, the weakened German 353rd Infantry Division stopped the 9th Infantry Division's attack deep into the southern half of the forest. One of the 9th Division's three infantry regiments (each reduced through combat to well under its paper strength of 3,300 soldiers) was attached to the 3rd Armored, and the two remaining regiments had no flank protection. Learning forest fighting on the job was a high-risk venture, and the Germans speedily halted the advance. "We ran out of gas," Collins remarked; "that is to say, we weren't completely dry, but the effect was much the same; we ran out of ammunition; and we ran out of weather."

During a costly follow-up attack between October 6 and 16, the same two regiments of the 9th Division paid a price of 1,000 casualties per mile in a four-mile deep venture against the German 275th Infantry Division in the center of the forest. Their target

was the town of Schmidt, located on high ground overlooking the big Schwammenauel Dam, though the town was not a stated objective of the attack.

What was going wrong for the Americans? German defenders were fighting from familiar ground, with pre-established artillery and mortar positions whose ranges had been calculated in advance. Their log and dirt-covered bunkers made excellent fighting positions that nothing short of a direct artillery hit could destroy. Leaders of small American units found it extremely difficult to control their troops, and medical evacuation and resupply were all but impossible much of the time. When they could, the Americans tried to integrate tanks into their infantry attacks, but as long as they remained deep in the forest, that didn't happen too often. The combat degenerated into a struggle of rifleman against rifleman among shattered trees, muddy firebreaks, and artillery-churned earth. It was vicious, brutal, terrifying, and utterly exhausting.

These events and others along the Allied front were disappointing. The port of Antwerp remained in enemy hands as November approached. Bradley's army group was buried in the mud, and

Opposite: Private First Class Harry Bremer of the 86th Chemical Mortar Battalion's Company A gets coordinates for his unit's next mortar attack. It is December 6, during the First Army's doomed push into the Hurtgen Forest. Above: On November 2, in preparation for the First Army offensive, Company E of the 28th Infantry Division's 110th Infantry Regiment creeps through the forest to attack the town of Schmidt.



FATIGUE AND COLD SHOW on these snow-dusted 78th Division GIs in a Hurtgen Forest chow line in December 1944. They are from Headquarters Company, 1st Battalion, 309th Infantry Regiment. The same weather that would soon make life miserable in Belgium's Ardennes during the Battle of the Bulge is already weighing on these Lightning Division men. At least they are wearing galoshes over their boots—an important but all too rare defense against trench foot, which could take a soldier out of combat as surely as any bullet.



BATTLE OF THE **BULGE**

FORETASTE OF THE BULGE
SIDE STORY

Frozen Dinner

operations in southern France were hampered by both the enemy and international politics. Confronted with a choice of waiting out the winter or continuing the overall offensive, the Allied ground commanders chose to build up combat power and keep fighting.

NOW THE STRUGGLE IN the Hurtgen Forest took a savage turn. Hodges's First Army was to press through the forest to seize the crossing on the Rhine south of Cologne. It would then encircle the Ruhr industrial area from the south. British Field Marshal Bernard Montgomery's 21st Army Group, meanwhile, would capture the port of Antwerp and then move on the Ruhr from the north. The Germans had to trade space for time, hoping the Americans would maintain their fruitless attacks deeper into the forest. While the Americans bogged down, the Germans could build reserves of manpower, equipment, and sup-

Before the main November attack, Hodges wanted to secure his army's southern flank, a task he assigned to Major General Norman D. Cota and his 28th Infantry Division. A lack of troops forced Cota to send each of his three infantry regiments in a different direction, too far apart to support one another. To Cota's misfortune, nearly every German general who had troops near the First Army's south flank happened to be attending a staff exercise on November 2, the day the attack began. Being all together, they were informed of the situation at once and were able to respond immediately with a well-coordinated plan, ordering units to cor-
don off the American penetration.

Two of Cota's regiments became instantly entangled in close fighting deep in the woods, but the 112th Infantry Regiment took the town of Schmidt early on. That was the *good* news. What happened on the morning of November 4, however, was, in the words



plies for the massive attack they planned to launch in the Ardennes (which would bring on the Battle of the Bulge).

Working in the Germans' favor was a solid cadre of officers and non-commissioned officers who had proved able to hold small units together long after they should have collapsed in the face of American firepower. Even the hastily formed and trained *volks-grenadier* divisions (smaller divisions fitted out chiefly for defense), not to mention the reconstituted veteran formations, had a significant number of machine guns available to them and an impressive amount of artillery.

The US First Army, on the other hand, had to ration ammunition during the critical period of October to mid November to build up reserve stocks for its main attack. The Americans' big guns (8-inch and 240mm) were able to fire an average of fewer than four rounds per day.



of one 112th veteran, "pure hell." A German counterattack ordered during the staff exercise slammed into the GIs at Schmidt that day. Lacking tank support, the American line evaporated as the German panzers aimed their cannons at individual soldiers. One GI remarked that the fire "was so loud, so powerful and so continuous that it seemed to form a background that you got used to." Exhausted to the point that they no longer cared whether they lived or died, the survivors abandoned the town.

Another 28th Division battalion, supported by a handful of tanks and tank destroyers that had managed to negotiate the narrow track that served as the 112th Infantry's main supply route, was in the neighboring village of Kommerscheidt. The armor did what it could to help delay the inevitable, but there, too, the American defense melted away in the face of overwhelming enemy fire.

Above, left: Two days into the First Army's drive toward the Roer, Private First Class Benny Barron of Company I, in the 4th Infantry Division's 8th Regiment, helps a buddy up a ragged Hurtgen Forest hill. Moving through the wilderness while battling a fierce enemy—often hand to hand—was deadly, terrifying, and exhausting. Above, right: A US mortar crew lobs a round in December. Only direct hits could disturb the Germans' log-and-earth fieldworks. Opposite: The same rocket unit seen on page 9 reloads its launchers on November 26 north of the town of Hurtgen.

German artillery on surrounding higher ground broke another of Cota's rifle battalions dug in at nearby Vossenack, which had been a US objective back in October. Some of the riflemen simply disappeared when a shell hit their foxhole. The breaking point for many GIs came on the morning of November 6, when near panic took hold. One lieutenant saw men "pushing, shoving, throwing away equipment, trying to outrun the artillery and each other." Quick-thinking leaders halted what might have been a disaster. Still, 28th Division rifle battalions that had begun the attack on November 2 with more than 800 men left the forest with fewer than 100, even after adding replacements.

The November battle cost more than 6,100 US casualties, and the Americans barely hung on to their starting positions. One GI who later fought in the Battle of the Bulge recalled, "nothing was so horrible as those days and nights in the forest." The arrival of fresh troops from the 4th Infantry Division changed nothing. "The men that came out with me were so damned tired that they stepped on the bodies," one officer remembered; "they were too tired to step over."

Despite such devastating results on its southern flank, the First Army moved forward on its push toward the Rhine on November 16. American and British planes filled the skies that afternoon, covering the start of the offensive. It was the war's largest air attack in support of ground troops. Hodges planned for portions of his army in the zones of the 1st and 4th Infantry Divisions to cross the Roer. Hundreds of tanks and tank destroyers, incessantly firing artillery, and a few hundred thousand GIs surged into the German

lines on the plains east of Aachen and deep in the Hurtgen Forest.

The attack was massive, but it failed to secure even the Roer. And once again, the Americans failed to target the dams. The First Army lost 25,000 of the nearly 100,000 troops fighting in and near the forest itself. One battalion in the 4th Infantry Division served under four commanders in a single day (two were wound-

ed and one killed). Rifle companies—about 190 soldiers at full strength—suffered more than 500 percent casualties after replacements were factored in. The division, about 14,000 soldiers strong, sustained nearly 5,800 casualties through the first week of December.

The hard bitten 1st Infantry Division also suffered in northern reaches of the forest outside Aachen. One regiment moved on the village of Merode, on the forest's eastern edge, where the hilly ground slopes onto the Roer plain. A fierce German counterattack destroyed two rifle companies on the night of November 29–30. Panzers fired directly into windows and blew down walls, while American tanks were stalled on

the muddy, tree-blocked firebreaks outside the village. "There is one to two enemy tanks and some infantry in town...," read a November 30, 1944, entry in the regiment's operations log. "I am afraid the men in the town are going to take a beating, but there is nothing we can do about it."

The First Army's attack included a renewed drive through the center of the forest against the town of Hurtgen and adjacent high ground. These areas had been objectives for months; only the combatants changed. Now, elements of the 8th Infantry and 5th Armored Divisions followed the 9th and 28th Infantry Divisions



BATTLE OF THE BULGE • FORETASTE OF THE BULGE SIDE STORY

The Mighty Dams

THE DAMS THAT THE AMERICANS had to control if they wanted to safely cross the Roer River to reach the Rhine River were—and still are—amazing feats of engineering and enduring construction. And even a cursory look at a few facts and figures about these monumental structures makes their military worth in World War II obvious.

The Roer River, which the Germans call the Rur (not the Ruhr, which is a different river), is 105.6 miles long and flows from Belgium into Germany and on to the Netherlands. The two great dams on the Roer, the Schwammenauel and Urft dams, are both in the Eifel, the wooded section of western Germany that encompasses the Hurtgen Forest and continues into Belgium, where it is called the Ardennes. Both of the dams are still in use.

The Schwammenauel Dam, built between 1934 and 1939, is the larger of the two dams. Standing a little more than 253 feet

tall, it holds back 53,679,760,812 gallons of water, creating the enormous *Rurstausee*, or Roer Lake. The dam is used to control flooding, to store fresh water, to make electricity, and to provide water for irrigation and industry.

The Urft Dam was built between 1900 and 1905 and is used for flood control and electrical generation. It is a little more than 190 feet tall and holds back 12,019,828,331 gallons of water.

The sudden release of the more than 65 billion gallons of water behind these two dams would have sent a hammer of water raging northwestward, sweeping away everything in its path and flooding the Roer, making it impassible. For an invading army, such a wall of water could be a barrier preventing entry into Germany—or a trap preventing exit, leaving the intruder pinched between the defending army and the river.



Medics assist wounded Private Benny Barron, whom we saw on the last spread helping his fellow soldier up a hill earlier the same day. Barron was one of up to 35,000 American casualties in the Hürtgen Forest; 12,000 of those were fatalities. Historians struggle to make sense of the US strategy in the Hürtgen Forest—repeated frontal attacks against an enemy who controlled the high ground in a dense woodland.

and the 12th Infantry Regiment. The distance from the attack position to the town was only three miles, but the town did not fall until November 28. House to house fighting was brutal and intense as GIs threw grenades through windows and doors, then assaulted with rifle and machine-gun fire. A handful of tanks added to the barrage. One lieutenant recalled, “each house [was] a determined strongpoint until the Germans inside at last became convinced they could hold no longer and still live.”

WHILE THE AMERICANS WERE SUCCEEDING in Hurtgen, the V Corps scrambled to control high ground farther east—ground that would enable it to protect the flank of the VII Corps, which was grinding toward the Roer plain. It took elements of the 5th Armored Division and US Army Rangers another week to claw just four miles to this high ground—the so-called Brandenburg Bergstein Ridge and adjacent Hill 400. The hill overlooked part of the reservoir created by the Schwammenauel Dam. The 272nd *Volksgranadier* Division resisted with all the strength and will it had.

As November gave way to December, Hodges’s First Army was still urgently trying to reach the Rhine, but was still tied up with

objectives that were now months old. The Germans were equally intent on protecting what would very soon become the northern anchor of their great counterattack, the Ardennes offensive. Finally, the Americans ordered air attacks to breach the two largest dams on the Roer—the Schwammenauel and the Urft—and force flooding. The air attacks failed.

Three months into operations in the Hurtgen Forest, on December 13, the new 78th Infantry “Lightning” Division and attached armor finally began the first ground attack aimed specifically at the Schwammenauel Dam. To the south, at the same time, the 2nd Infantry Division and a regiment of the 99th Division aimed an attack at the Urft Dam and its reservoir. Three days of fighting yielded little except more casualties—about 2,600 between the two arms of the attack.

The December 16 start of the Ardennes offensive—the Battle of the Bulge—was proof that the Germans had won the first phases of the forest fighting. They were able to launch their planned attack despite the presence of significant American forces to the north because they held a powerful and important weapon: the Roer dams. Consequently, the Americans couldn’t risk a counter-attack across the river.

After the situation in the bulge stabilized in early January 1945, the Americans renewed their attack to clear the wooded Ardennes-Eifel region of Belgium and Germany and reach the Rhine. This time the dams were a significant concern. A multiphase attack to capture them began on January 30 in yard-deep snow with shoulder-high drifts. The zone of attack for the first phase was the relatively open high ground on the south fringe of the forest, an area the Americans had earlier chosen not to use. The plan was to gain control of the Roer's west bank in this area. Then the 9th Infantry Division would capture the Urft Dam and reservoir, and the 78th would take the Schmidt plateau and the Schwammenauel Dam.

The 78th soon encountered a familiar enemy: the 272nd *Volks grenadier* Division, or what was left of it. The 78th, supported by elements of the veteran 5th Armored Division, fought hard between January 30 and February 3, 1945, for the open ground in the so-called Monschau Corridor south of Schmidt. The minefields, trenches, wire, and shell craters were "more reminiscent of a First World War battlefield than one of the Second," wrote one historian. Most of the farming villages that studded the area were the scene of hand to hand fighting in a landscape illuminated by burning houses and deep snow that covered minefields and separated the riflemen from their protecting tanks. The village of Kesternich was the scene of a chaotic house to house battle that proved the 78th had learned well the terrible lessons of December, when it had failed to hold the same village.

Most of the preliminary attacks south of Schmidt were complete by February 3, when the reinforced 78th began a final drive on Schmidt itself. To the south, it was somehow fitting that the veteran 9th Infantry Division, among the first to fight in the forest, secured the Urft Dam by February 5. As always, the Americans operated against the clock, this time with a scheduled February 10 start for the main attack to cross the Roer. This deadline put extreme pressure on the 78th Division and its commander, Major General E.P. Parker. In fact, the minute that Major General C.R. Huebner, who had replaced the reassigned Gerow as V Corps commander, suspected the attack was bogging down, he virtually assumed command of Parker's division, telling his subordinate how to deploy his units. Conflicting orders caused confusion, and the Germans took advantage of it. Parker spent hours sorting out the situation to get the attack moving again. Huebner would have done better staying out of the way.

Major General Eugen König, commander of the 272nd *Volks grenadier* Division, meanwhile searched behind his lines desperately for reinforcements. Skillfully delaying the Americans, he managed

to get much of his division on the east bank of the Roer by February 8. German combat engineers prepared the Schwammenauel Dam for destruction.

THE GIs WERE MOVING IN from the south (to avoid the terribly difficult western approaches used in the previous attacks on Schmidt) and were on the edge of Schmidt by February 7. Huebner was still clamoring for speed, and he put two of Parker's three infantry regiments under control of 9th Infantry Division commander Major General L.A. Craig, perhaps concluding that Parker was not up to the task. Despite this chaos, Parker's troops were clearing Schmidt and laying groundwork for the final assault by the late afternoon of February 9. Since Craig

was in direct control of operations, he next ordered a battalion of the 78th to occupy the bluffs overlooking the dam. In the utter darkness, some GIs literally fell into German foxholes, and hand-to-hand fighting followed. Others reached the Schwammenauel Dam.

The Americans found that the Germans had damaged the dam's valves and water was flowing through the gates, but that the dam itself remained intact. Combat engineers slid down the dam's 150 foot tall face and entered its machinery spaces to do their work. Questions from corps and army group streamed into the 78th Division headquarters. The final attack was scheduled to begin in hours. To ensure that any Germans who might interfere with the men at the dam were eliminated, some 30 battalions of American artillery (more than 400 guns) blasted what remained of the forest in this area. Explosions turned night into day. It must have been a sight to behold: the dark Roer valley illuminated by more modern artillery power than the entire US Army had possessed when the war began in 1939.

It became clear that although the dam was intact, the damage to the floodgates could not be repaired. There was no cata-

strophic flood, but the river continued its slow rise, and the Americans postponed their attack across the river. Still, they had finally accomplished a goal that had eluded them for months.

Between September 1944 and early February 1945, about 35,000 GIs and at least as many German soldiers were casualties from all causes in a campaign the American leadership approached with little if any imagination. The question since has been whether the fighting had to happen in the first place—or whether it could at least have ended sooner, and at a cost of fewer lives. ★

EDWARD G. MILLER is the author of *A Dark and Bloody Ground: The Hurtgen Forest and the Roer River Dams, 1944–1945* (2003).



The Germans, too, had suffered in the Hurtgen Forest. At least 28,000 were casualties, and about 12,000 of those were dead—a loss very close to what the Americans suffered. These battle-fatigued German soldiers surrendered to US 9th Infantry Division troops on December 12.

BATTLE OF THE BULGE

WINTER WAR 1944-1945

CHAPTER TWO

NEW HOPE For Hitler

As the vision of a German-ruled Europe grows dimmer, the Führer makes a bold, risky plan to save his Third Reich from ruin.

by Eric Ethier



CHAPTER TWO • NEW HOPE FOR HITLER



LIKE ROWS OF PEWS IN AN OPEN CHURCH, ramrod-straight evergreen and fir trees extended in every direction. Swaying in winter breezes, finger-like branches sprinkled soft tufts of snow and rust-tinged needles onto the luxurious carpet below. This was western Germany's wild and picturesque Eifel, a swath of rugged hills whose thick forests blended neatly into those of Belgium's vast Ardennes to the west. Within this silent and wondrous lair, a monster lurked, waiting to pounce on the unsuspecting prey before it. An armored composite of three German armies, the beast represented Adolf Hitler's last hope on a collapsing western front.

Six months after crashing ashore at Normandy, France, on June 6, 1944, three massive Allied army groups were knocking on the door to the German heartland, manning a broad front that stretched from the Netherlands south to Switzerland. But increasingly bitter weather and the grim veterans of Germany's army, the *Wehrmacht*, had slowed the Allies' left-right attack on Hitler's barbed Siegfried Line of defenses. Now, American politicians were getting antsy. "This slow-down in Europe has postponed by months, perhaps the greater part of a year, the throwing of needed additional forces and supplies into General MacArthur's Japanese campaign," complained Kansas Senator Arthur Capper.

Despite the perception of a stalemate, however, Supreme Allied commander Dwight D. Eisenhower had not forsaken his months-long advance from Normandy. Below Aachen, Germany, two 2nd Division infantry regiments were going after dams on the Roer River ahead of a First Army sweep. And far to the south, Third Army commander George S. Patton's latest assault on the Saar River was just days away. A winter offensive designed to finish off Hitler was in the offing.

Still, little was happening in the center of this meandering front, where the heart of Lieutenant General Courtney H. Hodges's First

Army of Lieutenant General Omar Bradley's Twelfth Army Group protruded through the scenic woods of the northern Ardennes. Here, beneath the stakeout of Major General Leonard Gerow's V Corps (the 2nd and 99th divisions)—Major General Troy Middleton's VIII Corps manned a line of improvised cabins and frosty trenches that stretched 85 miles from Monschau,

Germany, to Echternach, Luxembourg. In that line, from north to south, were parts of the 106th, 28th, 9th Armored, and 4th divisions. Middleton's mixed bag of 68,000 battle-worn veterans and green recruits were glad for the temporary quiet. The 4th and 28th divisions needed rest and retooling after weeks of brawling in Germany's Hurtgen Forest. The 99th and 106th divisions were filled with green troops sent to learn their trade in relative peace. Busy keeping warm in bone-chilling rain and fog, veterans and newer recruits alike were unaware of the danger before them.

Frankly, the danger seemed minimal. The hard-fighting *Wehrmacht* was a shadow of its once mighty self, ground down by four months of retreat while battling Soviet Premier Josef Stalin's gargantuan Red Army in the east. Months of Allied bombing had slowed Hitler's supply of fuel to a trickle, and Luftwaffe planes now rarely ventured outside German air



Previous spread: Adolf Hitler in the 1930s as Germany's chancellor and Führer. Top: Hitler's vision of dominating Europe drove rapid advances in arms. Weapons such as the Walther P38 pistol put Germany far ahead of other world powers. But by mid-1944, Nazi German ambitions crashed into Allied advances from east and west. That winter, Hitler focused on forcing a negotiated peace. To make that happen, he hoped to split the Western Allies' line with a thrust toward Antwerp, Belgium. Above: The offensive would hit US lines in Belgium's Ardennes. The 106th Infantry Division—whose patch this is—would be first hit. Opposite: A view near Bastogne, Belgium, shows the Ardennes' thick forests.





WAR MACHINES GAVE the Germans' Ardennes offensive its power. Here, a German Panther medium tank moves along a snowy road in the Ardennes. Three of the tank's five men ride atop the turret behind the powerful 75mm gun. It's late December 1944, and the Germans are still on the offensive. But their initial superiority in armored weapons is slipping away. Reinforcements are putting more American tanks, tank destroyers, and other armor in action in the Ardennes, giving German armor serious opposition.



space. The Führer himself was still recovering from Colonel Count Claus von Stauffenberg's July 20 attempt to assassinate him. Facing threats from without and within, Nazi Germany seemed to be teetering on the edge of total collapse.

Aside from all that, Hitler would never consider turning on his heel in the Ardennes, with its poor road system, in the winter—or so the Allied leaders believed. So, Eisenhower concentrated on the two pending attacks going out along the Allied flanks, and allowed the middle of his line to remain dangerously weak. The most vulnerable spot of all was in the center of Hodges's First Army, where the 106th Division dangled out on a limb across the Schnee Eifel, a rough plateau of heavy woods that poked into the Siegfried Line. Some Allied leaders saw the Schnee Eifel, along with the sparsely defended Losheim Gap above it, as a potentially valuable land bridge into Germany. On the other side of the border, meanwhile, Hitler saw it as a promising avenue for attacking the Allies.

Eisenhower was unworried about anything the Germans could throw at him through the Schnee Eifel or anywhere else. "At any moment from November 1 onward," Eisenhower later wrote, "I could have passed to the defensive along the whole front and made our lines absolutely secure from attack while we awaited reinforcements." Any German attack here, he believed, would be a most desperate roll of the dice. But in the Wolf's Lair, the Führer's fortified hideaway east of Rastenburg in German East Prussia (today part of Poland), Hitler was ready to gamble. In September, he had stunned his senior staff by ordering an offensive, a sudden lightning strike through Belgium reminiscent of the infamous 1940 *Wehrmacht* offensive that captured France. Dubbed Operation Watch on the Rhine and sharpened up by Hitler's skeptical generals that fall, the plan called for a three-pronged blitz through Middleton's sleepy VIII Corps followed by a drive across the Meuse River and a dash to the vital Belgian port of Antwerp. A decisive victory, Hitler hoped, would buy time for the production of fantastic new weapons, and by cutting Eisenhower's British and American force in half, it might even force the Allies to negotiate peace terms he could live with.

TO DO THAT, Hitler's armies would need roads. Even Belgium's notoriously brittle thruways were preferable to the Ardennes' spiderweb of secondary roads and spotty fields, which, if not hardened by the cold, would trap armor in a sea of spongy mud. To control the thruways, German forces would have to blast their way through the humble crossroads hubs of St. Vith and Bastogne, where a combined dozen main arteries converged and where American units responding to the assault were sure to converge.

To pull off the seemingly impossible, Hitler made the western front and its needs priority number one. He withdrew and retooled tired front line units, and channeled bottom-of-the-barrel replacement units into a formidable new attack force of some 250,000 men. Under a veil of secrecy, the cover of darkness, and the muted drone of aircraft, a flood of supplies, vehicles, and artillery batteries poured into assembly areas in forested zones behind the Siegfried Line.

Bypassing aging Field Marshal Gerd von Runstedt, commander of German troops in the west, Hitler handed the reins of his new assault force to monocolic Field Marshal Walther Model, a fanatical Nazi and the commander of Army Group B. On Model's right, General Josef "Sepp" Dietrich's powerful new Sixth SS Panzer (tank, from the German word for armor) Army would attack west through and above the Losheim Gap, swerve north-

west to cross the Meuse River at Liege, and then head for Antwerp. On the left, diminutive General Hasso von Manteuffel's Fifth Panzer Army would force its way through the Ardennes to secure St. Vith and Bastogne, and then shield Dietrich's left on the road to the Meuse. South of these tank heavy armies, General Erich Brandenberger's lighter Seventh Army would filter west through the rough terrain of Luxembourg to cut off American reinforcements from the south.

There was no room for error. Hitler was pinning his hopes on surprise, speed, and enough cloud cover to keep hawk-like Allied fighter-bombers off his columns during what he hoped would be a four-day race west.

By early December, rumors of enemy activity swirled through American outposts in the frigid Ardennes. Some GIs noticed changes. "The initial patrols I went on with my sergeant were what we refer to as reconnaissance patrols, which means you're only looking, and we used to run into German reconnaissance patrols," William S. Blaher of the 422nd Infantry later remembered. "Now, they were mostly old men and young boys and, all of a sudden..., maybe about the 14th, 15th of December, we encountered

combat patrols from the Germans, looking for a fight."

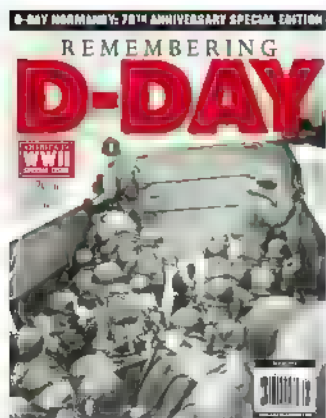
Hitler's secret preparations had also drawn the attention of American intelligence men, particularly those of Patton's Third Army staff. They knew of the Sixth SS Panzer Army's existence but not its precise location. In a December 14 meeting with Hodges and his First Army staff, Colonel Benjamin "Monk" Dickson stunned his colleagues by smacking a wall map and exclaiming, "It's the Ardennes!" But Dickson's superiors found the warnings of this confirmed pessimist tough to swallow, especially when the unpredictable army intelligence contingent departed on leave the next day, Dickson would be proven correct soon enough. ★



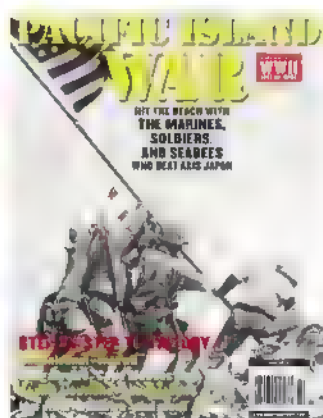
Nearly a quarter of a million men would join the initial Ardennes assault. Hitler entrusted command of the offensive to Field Marshal Walther Model, seen here with his trademark monocle. A veteran of 1941's invasion of the Soviet Union, Model was a favorite of Hitler's.

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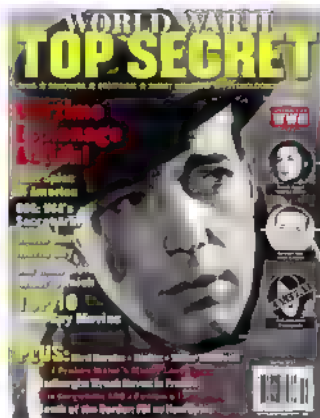
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BATTLE OF THE BULGE

NEW HOPE FOR HITLER
SIDE STORY

Wehrmacht Stalwarts



BUNDLED AGAINST THE COLD and laden with machine-gun ammunition, a German soldier does his duty in the Ardennes offensive in Belgium in December 1944. By the end, the force assembled for the ambitious operation numbered some 600,000 men. Germany's martial heritage stretched back to the Middle Ages, where the Iron Cross (top, seen here as the Nazi-era Iron Cross First Class) had its origins with the Teutonic Knights in the 1200s, during the Crusades.

PHOTO: NATIONAL ARCHIVES ARTIFACT CABA AMERICAN HERITAGE COLLECTION





AS A LAST-DITCH ATTEMPT TO AVOID LOSING EVERYTHING, the German Watch on the Rhine offensive pulled together troops of all kinds. This 27-year-old marine veteran of 6 years' service (opposite) was removed from the *Kriegsmarine* (navy) and pressed into army service. US troops of the 26th Infantry "Yankee" Division captured him around Butgenbach, Belgium, in January 1945, near the end of the Battle of the Bulge. The tools of war, like this German army *Stahlhelm*, or "steel helmet" (top left), and Model 24 grenade (top right, nicknamed the "potato masher"), were made for adults. But in Hitler's Germany, desperation led to the deployment of boy soldiers. These two teenagers (above) are members of the 12th SS Panzer Division "*Hitlerjugend*" ("Hitler Youth"), which went up against a US armored force on Elsenborn Ridge, near the top anchor of the bulged American line in Belgium.

PHOTOS: NATIONAL ARCHIVES ARTIFACTS; WILLIAM S. JACKSON COLLECTION

**BATTLE OF THE
BULGE**
WINTER WAR 1944-1945
CHAPTER 1

The
**WINTER
BLITZ**

First came shells and rockers. Then, through the dark and fog came a thundering crowd of tanks.

The Battle of the Bulge was on.

by Eric Ethier



CHAPTER THREE • THE WINTER BLITZ

AT 5:30 A.M. ON DECEMBER 16, GERMAN ARTILLERY SHATTERED the frosty stillness of the Ardennes. Clusters of explosions rocked the lethargic American front. Beneath screaming V-1 rockets bound for Liege, thousands of shells reached deep behind VIII Corps lines to splinter trees and disrupt communications. Across a 37-mile-wide stretch of the Ardennes, bleary-eyed GIs looked out from their foxholes into drifting fog—and saw an incoming tide of ghostly, white-garbed Germans and rumbling panzers. Caught in the Losheim Gap south of Gerow's 99th Division on the 106th Division's northern edge, the US 14th Cavalry Group crumbled. Columns of panicked troops fled west with Dietrich's divisions hot on their heels. Manteuffel's legions raced around the flanks of the Schnee Eifel to cut off its unfortunate defenders, the 422nd and 423rd Infantry.

In Echternach, Brandenburg's infantry "entered the town three or four abreast, yelling like Indians," recalled one 4th Division veteran. "Their officers strutted under cloth forage caps and twirled canes. Their equipment was all the newest and latest stuff and they seemed in tip-top shape. They came at us from the north-east, southeast and east. When I looked out at the hills, it looked like all I could see was mobs of Germans streaming toward the town."

Back home, American newspapers made little of the outbreak. "No one at Allied Supreme Headquarters gave the Germans much chance of making any serious inroads on Allied territory, although their attacks might accomplish the prime purpose of gaining a few days surcease from the Allied drive toward the Rhine," read Rhode Island's *Providence Journal*. Eisenhower, however, suspected that Hitler was up to something bigger, and started a rapid mobilization. While veteran 28th Division outfits bought precious time at Clervaux, Wiltz, and other frontline towns, Ike authorized the transfer of Patton's 10th Armored Division to Bastogne and the 7th Armored Division from Lieutenant General William H. Simpson's Ninth Army to St. Vith. He also sent Major General Matthew Ridgway's XVIII Airborne Corps rolling east in trucks—the 82nd Airborne Division to Werbomont and the 101st eventually to Bastogne.

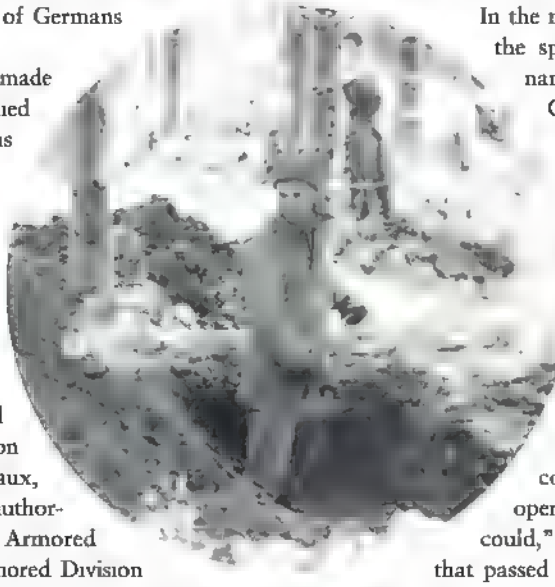
The idea was to wall in Model's armies and slow them in the tricky terrain long enough for counterattacking units to stop them altogether. Behind the shifting front, however, German daredevil Lieutenant Colonel Otto Skorzeny had unleashed his 150th Panzer Brigade—the so-called Trojan Horse Brigade of men wearing captured uniforms and posing as Allied soldiers. Impressed by Skorzeny's spectacular rescue of Italy's imprisoned former dictator

Benito Mussolini in September 1943, Hitler had rewarded him with command of Operation *Greif* ("Griffin"), a well-thought-out plot to disrupt the American response to the Ardennes invasion from inside the US forces. Skorzeny's main force, operating captured American tanks (and panzers disguised as US tanks), was cut to pieces south of Malmedy. But the brigade's commandos, whom Skorzeny had armed with foolproof identification and undetectable accents, successfully misdirected Allied traffic, cut telephone wires, and spread fear and false information among military police and rearguard units. Their shadowy presence even sparked rumors of an assassination plot against Eisenhower.

In the north, meanwhile, *Kampfgruppe* Peiper—the spearhead of the 1st SS Panzer Division named for its grim commander, Lieutenant Colonel Joachim Peiper—quickly wheeled past snarls of traffic and across 30 miles of winding roads to threaten the towns around First Army headquarters at Spa. Along the way, at a crossroads east of Malmedy, Peiper's black-garbed men trapped Battery B of the 285th Field Observation Artillery Battalion. Steering some 150 disarmed artillerymen, medical personnel, and previously captured military police and infantrymen into a field, the Germans confiscated their valuables—and then opened fire. "We all fell and lay as still as we could," one survivor testified later. "Every tank

that passed from then on would fire into the group laying there. At one time they came around with pistols and fired at every officer that had bars showing. An officer put mud on his helmet to cover his bars." Sliding west, Peiper's command left at least 70 American bodies to stiffen in the snow.

ELSEWHERE, THINGS WERE NOT GOING so well for the Germans. Dietrich's attack bogged down on jam packed roads and startling pockets of resistance. South of Monschau, on the streets of Krinkelt and Rocherath, scrambling 99th Division GIs fought off 12th SS Panzer Division tanks with Molotov cocktails. Correspondent Morley Cassidy described the chaotic scene at



Previous spread: A German soldier signals an advance at the start of the Ardennes offensive, in a still from a propaganda film. Behind him lies a crumpled American halftrack. Above: When the attack came, GIs along the US line in the Ardennes were living in tents, and in foxholes like the one Corporal Roy Jordan is working on with pick and shovel in frozen ground. Opposite: Private First Class Lloyd G. Taylor, toting the business end of a .30-caliber machine gun, takes a break. Nowhere were US foot soldiers more severely tested than in the Bulge.



BATTLE OF THE BULGE

THE WINTER BLITZ
SIDE STORY

The Impostors



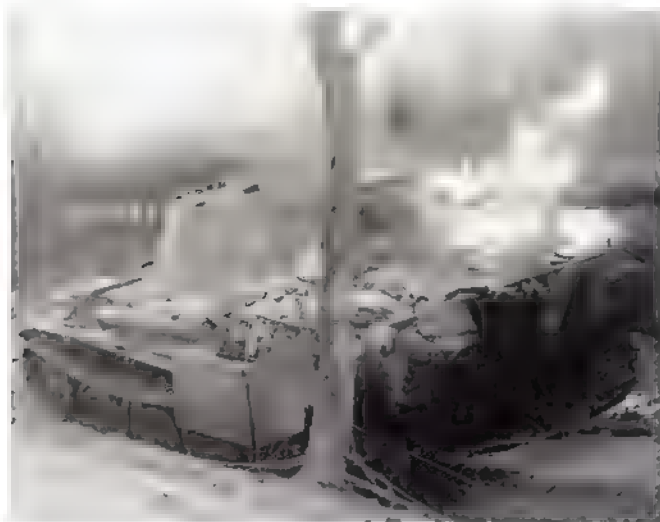


GERMANS CAPTURED WEARING US UNIFORMS pay the price for espionage on December 23, 1944. Corporal Manfred Pernass (left) and officer candidate Günther Billing (center) were part of Colonel Otto Skorzeny's Panzer Brigade 150, which used captured or disguised vehicles and wore US or British uniforms. In Operation *Gretf* ("Griffin"), they got behind US lines to gather intelligence, sow chaos by passing false orders and moving signs and markers, and, ideally, to capture Meuse River bridges. Under the Hague Convention of 1907, Pernass (right), Billing, and other operatives captured in US uniforms were executed by firing squad.

CHAPTER THREE • THE WINTER BLITZ

Wirtzfeld, where grenadiers surprised Major General Walter Robinson's shorthanded 2nd Division troops: "Cooks, kitchen police, and headquarters clerks were jumping from pots, pans, and typewriters to grab rifles, grenades and pistols. Many of these men hadn't fired a weapon since hitting the Normandy beach on D Day plus one and they scrambled madly to find weapons and ammunition." The desperate defense bought time for Hodges and Robertson to recall regiments from Wahlerscheid and plan defensive positions behind the towns, along Elsenborn Ridge, on which a frustrated Dietrich would soon find himself snagged.

For the Americans, the real threat quickly proved to be Mantuffel, who lunged for the vital road hubs while his LVIII Panzer Corps steamrolled for the Meuse. At St. Vith, 106th Division commander Major General Alan Jones stalled oncoming German LXVI Infantry Corps units with just 500 men of the 81st Engineer Combat Battalion under Lieutenant Colonel Thomas Riggs until 7th and 9th Armored Division tanks surged east through maddening knots of unbudging traffic and into town. Left in command by Jones, Brigadier General Bruce Clarke of the 7th Armored Division's Combat Command B then pieced together a horseshoe-shaped shield using his armored units and two wayward outfits, the 106th Division's 424th Regiment and the 28th Division's 112th Regiment.



On the second day of the blitz, a German tank burns on the road between Wirtzfeld and Krinkelt, Belgium, near the top anchor of the bulged US line. The tank was destroyed by shells from an American M4 Sherman tank. Tanks would play a huge role in the battle.

Thirty miles southeast stood Bastogne, a lonesome railroad town of 3,500 through which seven hard topped roads coursed. VIII Corps commander Troy Middleton was scrambling to ward off the rampaging Panzer *Lehr* (teach) Division (built around an elite core of former military instructors) and 2nd Panzer Division of General Heinrich von Lüttwitz's XLVII Panzer Corps. "Bastogne must be captured, if necessary from the rear," Lüttwitz had been told. "Otherwise it will be an abscess in the route of advance and tie up too many forces." Over two days, no less than five American task forces parceled from the 9th and 10th

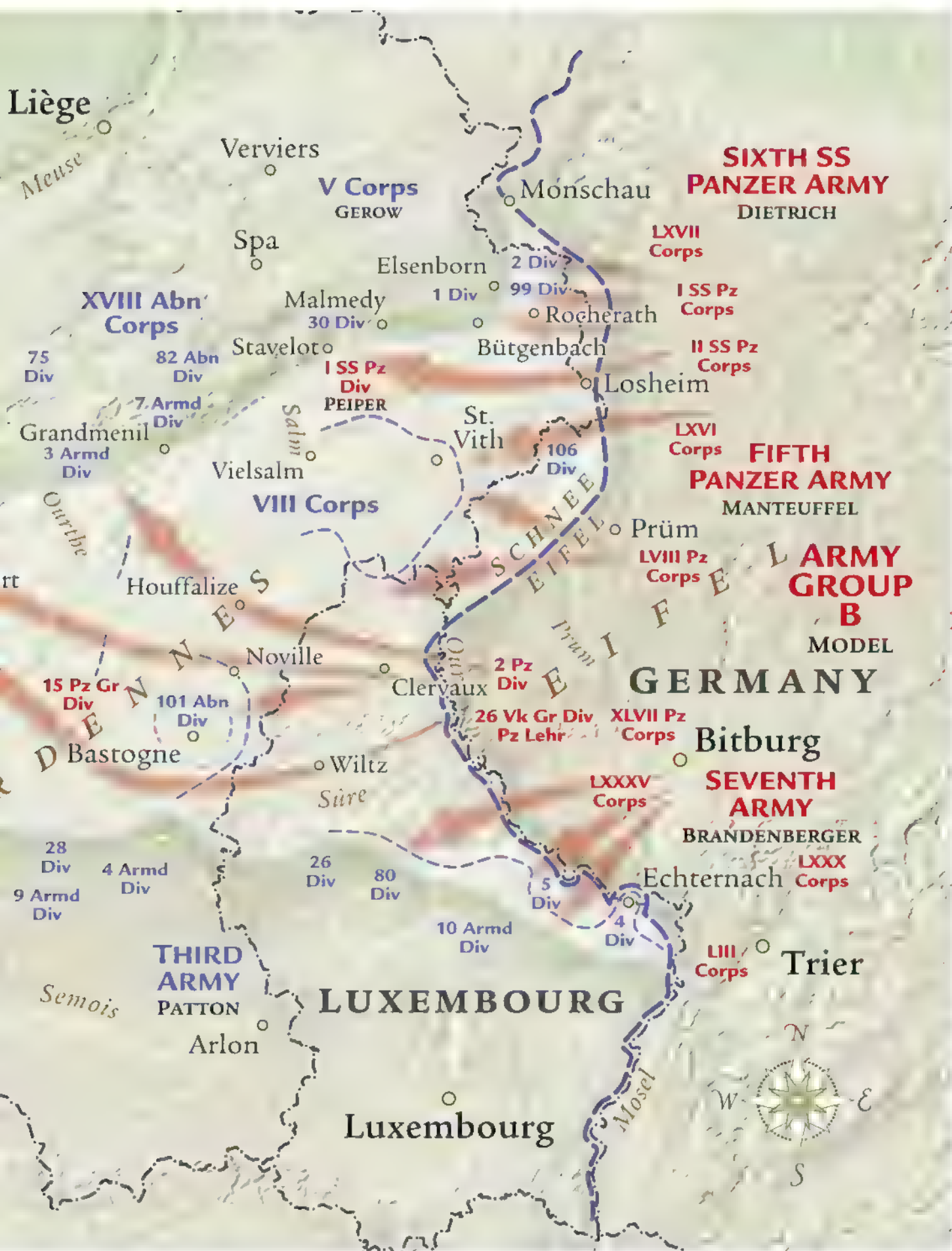
Divisions. The 106th Division's 424th Regiment and the 28th Division's 112th Regiment. Thirty miles southeast stood Bastogne, a lonesome railroad town of 3,500 through which seven hard topped roads coursed. VIII Corps commander Troy Middleton was scrambling to ward off the rampaging Panzer *Lehr* (teach) Division (built around an elite core of former military instructors) and 2nd Panzer Division of General Heinrich von Lüttwitz's XLVII Panzer Corps. "Bastogne must be captured, if necessary from the rear," Lüttwitz had been told. "Otherwise it will be an abscess in the route of advance and tie up too many forces." Over two days, no less than five American task forces parceled from the 9th and 10th

Hitler's Last Hope

Expanding the Ardennes Bulge BELGIUM AND LUXEMBOURG

December 16-24, 1944





Liège

Meuse

Verviers

V Corps
GEROW

Spa

Elsenborn

Monschau

SIXTH SS
PANZER ARMY
DIETRICH

LXVII
Corps

Malmedy
30 Div

1 Div

99 Div

Rocherath

I SS Pz
Corps

Bütgenbach

II SS Pz
Corps

Stavelot

Losheim

XVIII Abn
Corps

82 Abn
Div

7 Armd
Div

75
Div

Grandmenil

3 Armd
Div

Salm

Vielsalm

VIII Corps

St. Vith

106
Div

LXVI
Corps

FIFTH
PANZER ARMY
MANTEUFFEL

Houffalize

Noville

Clervaux

2 Pz
Div

LXVIII Pz
Corps

ARMY
GROUP
B
MODEL

GERMANY

15 Pz Gr
Div

101 Abn
Div

Bastogne

26 Vk Gr Div
Pz Lehr

XLVII Pz
Corps

Bitburg

SEVENTH
ARMY

BRANDENBERGER

LXXX
Corps

Wiltz

Sûre

LXXXV
Corps

Echternach

5 Div

4 Div

10 Armd
Div

LIII
Corps

Trier

THIRD
ARMY
PATTON

LUXEMBOURG

Arlon

Luxembourg

Semois

Mosel





BATTLE OF THE BULGE

THE WINTER BLITZ
SIDE STORY

Scattered
from
The Sky

THE OFFENSIVE THAT CREATED the bulge in the American Ardennes line started with a roar of engines, as every wheeled vehicle the German army could muster raced forward. But there were other engines revving, too—the motors of Junkers Ju 52 transport planes hauling German paratroopers on Operation Stösser. To Germans, the name evoked a fierce, swooping bird of prey, but the mission would turn out to be nothing like that. It would instead be uniquely predestined to fumbling futility.

The trouble with Operation Stösser began with its commander. Lieutenant Colonel Friedrich August Freiherr von der Heydte was a seasoned parachute infantry officer. But he was also an aristocrat vaguely suspected of possible connections to a July 1944 attempt to assassinate Adolf Hitler. Being just pen strokes away from the Führer's blacklist, he had little hope of gaining the ear of army higher-ups about his concerns with Operation Stösser.



A GROUP OF GERMAN *Fallschirmjäger*, or paratroopers, photographed in the late spring or summer of 1944. On the night of December 17, a *Fallschirmjäger* task force attempted to jump behind US lines. The result was disaster.

NATIONAL ARCHIVES

Von der Heydte was given eight days to put together a *Fallschirmjäger* (paratrooper) force, jump behind American lines, and secure an essential crossroads near Malmédy, Belgium, ahead of the German ground offensive. He was to hold the crossroads until the 12th SS Panzer Division showed up. To accomplish this daring mission, however, von der Heydte had to rely, not on his own unit, but on an ad hoc task force of 1,200 men sent from various *Fallschirmjäger* units (though many of his own men voluntarily made the jump, too). The men he received were mostly green paratroopers or problem personnel.

After a day's postponement due to the late arrival of the mission's transport planes, von der Heydte's task force took off in a snowstorm on the night of December 17 to jump—some for the very first time—on un reconnoitered drop zones, from planes flown by pilots who had never flown *Fallschirmjäger* missions

before, let alone at night. Von der Heydte might be forgiven if he felt Operation Stosser was doomed.

And it *was* doomed. Wind and navigational errors scattered the *Fallschirmjäger* widely. For some, inexperience led to death or serious injury upon landing. On the ground, von der Heydte managed to pull together about 300 men. But without adequate provisions or ammunition, and with no radio connection to head quarters, there was little they could do but creep back through snow and bitter cold—dodging US 1st Infantry Division and 3rd Armored Division troops all the way.

Only some would make it back to German lines. Von der Heydte wasn't one of them. Near Monschau, Germany, sick and nursing a broken arm, he had no choice but to surrender to the Americans. Perhaps for that reason, he survived to pursue post-war careers in academia and government. ★



Armored divisions threw themselves in Lüttwitz's way, virtually sacrificing themselves to buy time for the oncoming 101st Airborne Division, whose 11,000 Screaming Eagles began pouring into town late on December 18

The Screaming Eagles were led by Brigadier General Anthony McAuliffe. The 46-year-old artillery chief was subbing for Major General Maxwell D. Taylor, who was tied up in Washington, DC. Heading to Werbomont, 25 miles to the north, McAuliffe discovered his division had been rerouted to Bastogne only when he stopped there for a briefing with Middleton, who was preparing to relocate his besieged headquarters. Instructed to hold the town at all costs, McAuliffe began deploying his division at dawn the

Seventh Army with three divisions: the 4th Armored, targeting Bastogne; the 26th Division, targeting Wiltz; and the 80th Division, targeting St. Vith.

THE HELP WOULD COME TOO LATE for the 422nd and 423rd Infantry regiments. Due to delayed withdrawal orders, they were quickly surrounded in a pocket east of St. Vith. "We had nothing but .30 caliber—no food, medicines, or blankets," one officer later testified. "The latter items were the worst because there was a steady stream of wounded from the gully to our west and without dressings or blankets there was nothing that we could do except let them lie there in their gore and shiver—with the



Opposite: In one of the villages that dotted the Ardennes, battle damage has let snow inside a ruined church. Above: Such damage was inevitable with shells flying from guns and tanks of every size. One of the most powerful was the German "King Tiger" heavy tank, which toted an 88mm gun on its hulking body (up to 76.9 tons). These six GIs were credited with knocking out four King Tigers near Stavelot.

next morning, when Lieutenant Colonel Julian J. Ewell's weary 501st Parachute Infantry marched east to make its bloody debut around the quiet, wooded villages of Neffe and Wardin.

Eisenhower, meanwhile, gathering his brain trust at Verdun, France, on December 19, got a boost from Patton. The Third Army commander told the stunned gathering he could disengage from his Saar front, shift his army 90 degrees, and strike north by December 22. "There was a stir, a shuffling of feet, as those present straightened up in their chairs," Patton's longtime aide Colonel Charles Codman noted. "In some faces skepticism. But through the room the current of excitement leaped like a flame." The Herculean feat was possible, in part, because the big talking Patton already had his staff planning the move. Two days later, he jumped off from Luxembourg to assail Brandenburg's mired

most goddam pitiful look in their eyes." Some 8,000 men were shipped east to German stalags.

Looking to streamline communications, Eisenhower turned over command of the bulging battleground's northern half—Hodges's First Army and Lieutenant General William H. Simpson's Ninth—to Field Marshal Sir Bernard Montgomery, the self-assured Brit and 21st Army Group commander who had for three years rankled American brass. The move caused a firestorm. Montgomery subsequently recalled Major General J. Lawton Collins, commander of Hodges' VII Corps, west to Marche to organize a counterattack force that eventually comprised the fresh 75th, the 84th, and the 2nd Armored divisions. He intended to deploy the force *after* the German drive was spent, a strategy that irked American generals inclined to counterattack immediately. ★



WINTER 1944–1945 CAME TO THE ARDENNES with special rigor. In fact, January 1945 was Europe's coldest January on record. These 82nd Airborne troops of the 504th Parachute Infantry's 3rd Battalion certainly felt it. Pelted by snow, trudging through more of the stuff, they move to the attack near Herresbach, Belgium, in January 1945, aided by a tank and a mule.

PHOTO: NATIONAL ARCHIVES

BATTLE OF THE BULGE

THE WINTER BLITZ
SIDE STORY

SLOW GO In The Snow







SNOW MADE EVERYTHING HARDER. Opposite: For some, hardship sparked ingenuity. This First Army private in a foxhole in Belgium uses a captured blowtorch to heat water. Above, left: Few GIs were fortunate enough to ride in an M29 Weasel Cargo Carrier like the one this GI drives outside Schopen, Belgium. Above, center: Private David Hibbitt—an 83rd Division GI at Lierneux, Belgium, exhausted after three days of nonstop combat—has to chip ice out of his canteen before he can refill it. Above, right: At Ligneuville, Belgium, T/5 Everett Lambert, 270th Engineer Battalion, has waterproofed his mine detector by wrapping it in a plastic gas cape (rain gear made to fit over a man wearing a gas mask). Below: Men of the 7th Armored Division's 517th Armored Infantry slog through snow near Iveldingen, Belgium, on January 20, en route to help liberate St. Vith.

PHOTOS THIS SPREAD: NATIONAL ARCHIVES



TRACKED WAR MACHINES

In The Battle of The Bulge

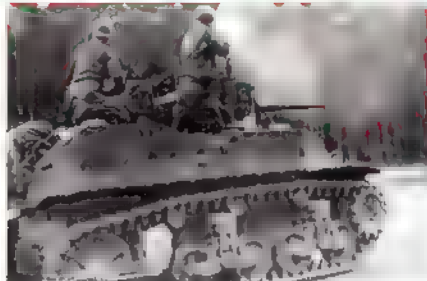
Common tanks, transports, and personnel carriers of the Ardennes conflict.

IMAGES FROM THE NATIONAL ARCHIVES AND OTHER PUBLIC SOURCES

AMERICAN WAR MACHINES



Medium Tank M4, "Sherman"
33.4 tons • 19' 2" l x 8' 7" w x 9' h
Max. Range: 120 mi • Top Speed: 35 mph
Weapons: 75mm, 76mm, or 105mm gun;
one .50-cal and two .30-06-cal machine guns
Crew: 5



Light Tank M5 and M5A1, "Stuart VI"
16.2 tons • 14' 2.4" l x 8' 1.2" w x 7' 6" h
Max. Range: 74 mi • Top Speed: 36 mph
Weapons: 37mm gun; three .30-06-cal
machine guns • Crew: 4



3-inch Gun Motor Carriage, M-10, Tank Destroyer
32.5 tons • 22' 5" (w/gun) l x 10' w x 8' 5" h
Max. Range: 186 mi • Top Speed: 32 mph
Weapons: 3" gun; .50-cal machine gun
Crew: 5



76mm Gun Motor Carriage, M-18, "Hellcat" Tank Destroyer
19.5 tons • 21' 11" (w/gun) l x 9' 5" w x 8' 5" h
Max. Range: 105 mi • Top Speed: 57 mph
Weapons: 76mm gun; .50-cal machine gun
Crew: 5



90mm Gun Motor Carriage, M-36, Tank Destroyer
32 tons • 24' 6" (w/gun) l x 10' w x 10' 9" h
Max. Range: 150 mi • Top Speed: 30 mph
Weapons: 90mm gun; .50-cal machine gun
Crew: 5



75mm Howitzer Motor Carriage M8, Self-Propelled Gun
18 tons • 16' 4" l x 7' 7" w x 8' 11" h
Max. Range: 99 mi • Top Speed: 36 mph
Weapons: 75mm gun; .50-cal machine gun
Crew: 4



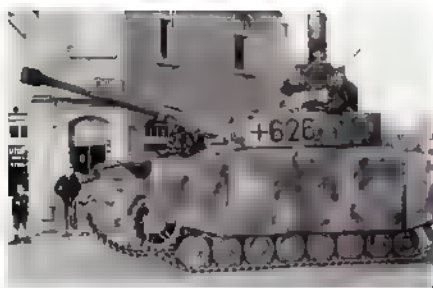
Light Armored Car M8 "Greyhound"
8.6 tons • 16' 5" l x 8' 4" w x 7' 5" h
Max. Range: 350 mi • Top Speed: 56 mph
Weapons: 37mm gun; .30- and .50-cal
machine guns • Crew: 4



M29 Weasel Cargo Carrier
1.9 tons • 10' 6" l x 5' w x 4' 3" h
Max. Range: 165 mi • Top Speed: 36 mph
Crew: 4



Carrier, Personnel Half-track M3
10.25 tons • 20' 3" l x 7' 3" w x 7' 5" h
Max. Range: 175 mi • Top Speed: 45 mph
Weapons: one .50-cal machine gun,
two .30-cal machine guns
Capacity: 3 crew, 10 passengers



PzKpfw IV, "Panzer IV" Medium Tank
27.6 tons • 23' (w/gun) 1 x 9' 5" w x 8' 10" h
Max. Range: 120 mi • Top Speed: 26 mph
Weapons: 7.5cm gun;
two 7.92mm machine guns
Crew: 5



PzKpfw VI Tiger Ausf. E, "Tiger I" Heavy Tank
60 tons • 27' 9" (w/gun) 1 x 11' 8" w x 9' 10" h
Max. Range: 121 mi • Top Speed: 28.2 mph
Weapons: 8.8cm gun;
two 7.92mm machine guns
Crew: 5



PzJg IV/70 Tank Destroyer
28.4 tons • 27' 11" l x 10' 5" w x 6' 1" h
Max. Range: 130 mi • Top Speed: 25 mph
Weapons: 7.5cm gun; 7.92mm machine gun
Crew: 4



Grille 38, "Grille" Self-Propelled Gun
12.68 tons • 16' 3" l x 7' 1" w x 8' 1" h
Max. Range: 120 mi • Top Speed: 22 mph
Weapons: 15cm gun; 7.92mm machine gun
Crew: 4

GERMAN WAR MACHINES

GERMAN ABBREVIATIONS AND TENMEI

PzKpfw: Panzerkampfwagen, armored combat vehicle, or tank. *PzJg*: Jagdpanzer, hunting tank
StuPz: Sturmpanzer, assault tank. *Ausf*: Ausführung, version. *Marder*: marten. *Hetzer*: chaser.
Brummbär: grizzly bear or grouch. *Grille*: cricket.
Stu.G.: Sturmgeschütz, assault gun. *SdKfz*: Sonderkraftfahrzeug, special purpose vehicle.



PzKpfw Tiger Ausf. B, "Tiger II" or "King Tiger" Heavy Tank
75.5-76.9 tons • 33' 9" (w/gun) 1 x 12' 4" w x 10' 2" h • Max. Range: 110 mi • Top Speed: 25.8 mph • Weapons: 8.8cm gun; two 7.92mm machine guns • Crew: 5



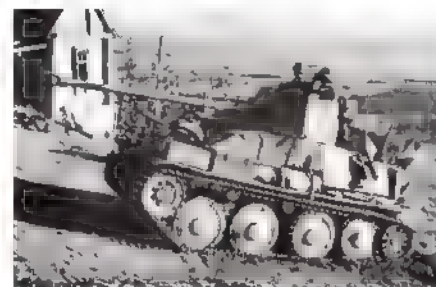
PzJg 38(t), "Hetzer" Tank Destroyer
17.36 tons • 20' 11" l x 8' 8" w x 7' 1" h
Max. Range: 110 mi • Top Speed: 26 mph
Weapons: 7.5cm gun; 7.92mm machine gun
Crew: 4



StuG III Assault Gun
26.35 tons • 22' 6" l x 9' 8" w x 7' 1" h
Max. Range: 96 mi • Top Speed: 25 mph
Weapons: 7.5cm gun; 7.92mm machine gun
Crew: 4



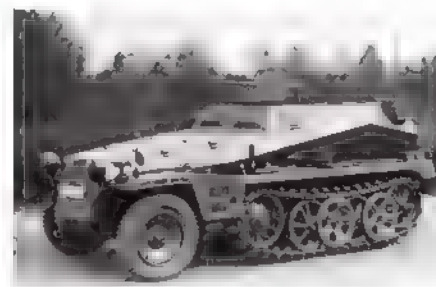
PzKpfw Panther, Medium Tank
49.4 tons • 28' 5" (w/gun) 1 x 10' 9" w (minus skirts) x 9' 10" h
Max. Range: 160 mi • Top Speed: 34 mph
Weapons: 7.5cm gun; two 7.9mm machine guns
Crew: 5



Marder III Tank Destroyer
11.76 tons • 15' 3" l x 7' 9" w x 8' 2" h
Max. Range: 210 mi • Top Speed: 26.1 mph
Weapons: 7.5cm or 7.62cm gun;
7.92mm machine gun
Crew: 4

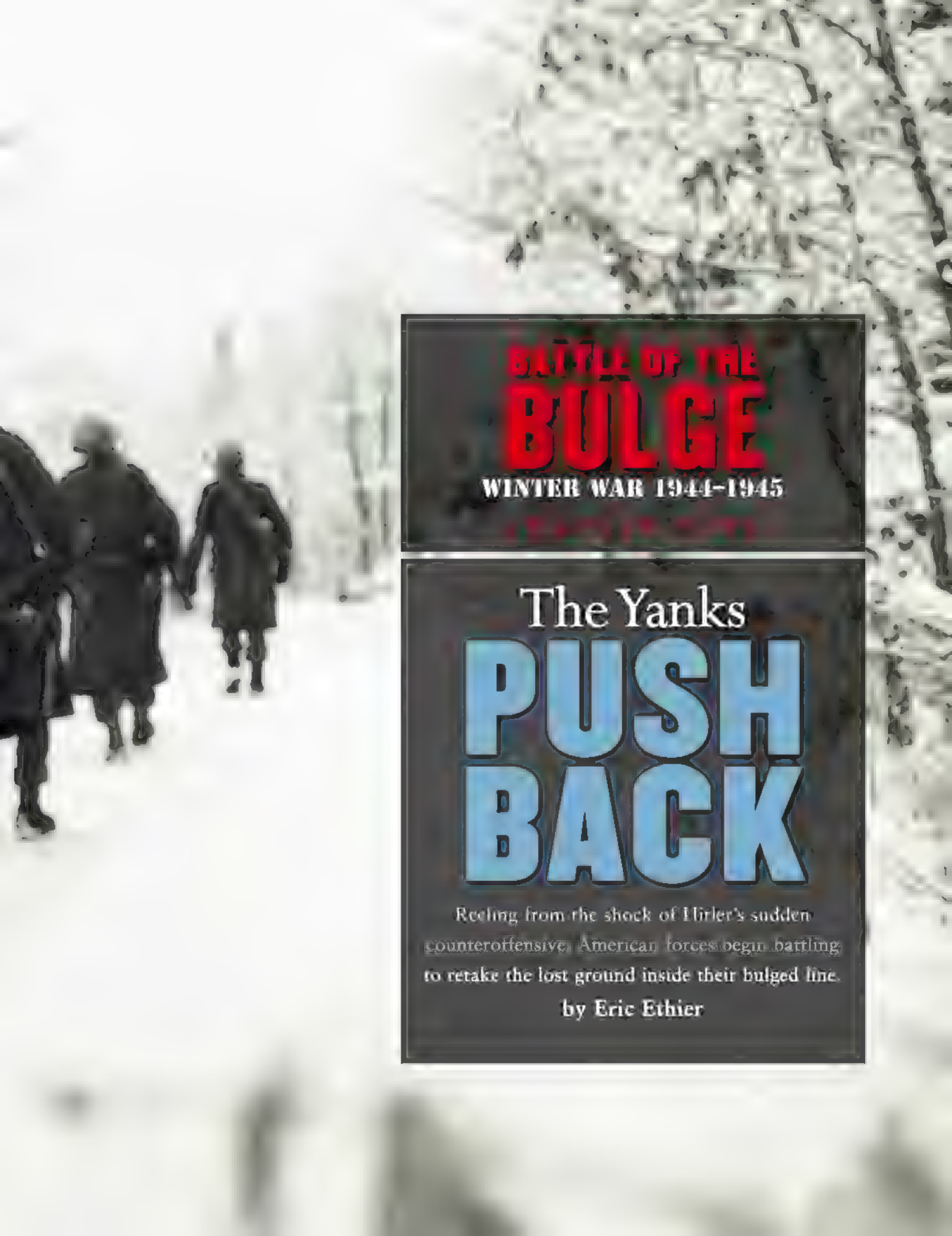


StuPz 43 or IV, "Brummbär" Heavy Assault Gun
31.09 tons • 19' 5" l x 9' 5" w x 8' 3" h
Max. Range: 130 mi • Top Speed: 25 mph
Weapons: 15cm gun; 7.92mm machine gun
Crew: 5 (shown without treads)



SdKfz 251 Half-track Armored Personnel Carrier
8.61 tons • 19' 1 x 6' 10" w x 5' 9" h
Max. Range: 186 mi • Top Speed: 32.5 mph
Weapons: two 7.92mm machine guns
Capacity: 2 crew, 10 passengers





BATTLE OF THE **BULGE**

WINTER WAR 1944-1945

The Yanks

PUSH BACK

Reeling from the shock of Hitler's sudden counteroffensive, American forces begin battling to retake the lost ground inside their bulged line.

by Eric Ethier

CHAPTER FOUR • THE YANKS PUSH BACK



BY DECEMBER 21, HITLER, FRUSTRATED WITH THE STALEMATE IN THE NORTH, had transferred Dietrich's II SS Panzer Corps—the 2nd and 9th SS Panzer divisions—south to Manteuffel, who threw it at St. Vith, the nagging wedge between his Fifth Panzer Army flanks. Outside town, in a hilltop outpost ringed by cans crammed with primed grenades, Rhode Islander Edward Romoli listened as enemy shells whistled overhead. “I was thinking, ‘Wow! They are really getting hit behind us! They’re really getting hit!’” he remembered. “And the next thing I knew we

tried calling our Command Post on our right. No answer. We tried to call the post to our left. No answer. Then one of the guys said, ‘I’ll go check.’” The charred posts were littered with dead.

Under a shroud of darkness, German tanks rolled through a blitz of shells from the 275th Armored Field Artillery and down the Schönberg road to St. Vith’s smoking fringe. On December 23, under the cover of banging artillery batteries, the town’s last few defenders slipped west through Vielsalm. There, 7th Armored Division commander Brigadier General Richard Hasbrouck and Clarke of the division’s Combat Command B managed to pull off a remarkable withdrawal, thanks to a fortuitous

cold snap that suddenly stiffened the ground. Thousands of exhausted refugees escaped northwest over the Salm River and into Major General James Gavin’s 82nd Airborne lines. “The books said it couldn’t be done—a daylight withdrawal like this,” said a satisfied Lieutenant Colonel John P. Wemple of the 17th Tank Battalion. “But we did it.”

The St. Vith holding action had cost the Americans 90 tanks and at least 3,400 casualties including Hasbrouck himself, who was captured. But it had bought precious time for the men dug in around Bastogne. Now Bastogne’s Screaming Eagles became the intended prey of increasingly desperate German commanders.

Previous spread: Men of I Company, 333rd Infantry, 84th Division, trudge through snow to new positions on January 5, 1945. They are advancing near Forge à la Plez, Belgium, on the Bulge’s north arc, near its farthest reach. Above: Captain Joseph P. Kenny, a Catholic chaplain with the 82nd Airborne Division’s 508th Parachute Infantry, celebrates a hood-top Mass for the 3rd Battalion on Epiphany, January 6, 1945, in Belgium. Opposite: From a rooftop in Beffe, Belgium, on the north arc of the Bulge, Staff Sergeant Urban Minicozzi and Private First Class Andy Masiero hunt the hunters. The two sharpshooters from the 75th Division’s 290th Infantry are sniping at German snipers.

ALL PHOTOS THIS STORY: NATIONAL ARCHIVES



BATTLE OF THE BULGE

THE YANKS PUSH BACK
SIDE STORY

No Feet To Stand On

IT'S ONE THING to get your feet wet when you can step into your house and put on dry footwear. When you have to wear the same wet boots day after day, however, and you no longer have dry socks to put on, you risk getting trench foot. During the Battle of the Bulge, many GIs came down with trench foot as they marched and stood in snow and water day after day in leather combat boots. As some found out, it could cost them their feet.

After initial numbness, discoloration, and swelling, trench foot leads to blisters and sores. These open up, and fungal infections begin. Unless the sufferer gets medical attention, gangrene sets in, and that may require amputation of part or all of the affected foot. Trench foot can be treated if caught before gangrene takes hold, though the patient will be likely to get trench foot more easily in the future.

The secret to preventing trench foot in World War II was ridiculously simple: galoshes (two of the GIs on page 54 wear them) over combat boots, or shoe-pacs, which a January 1, 1945, *Time* magazine article described as "synthetic rubber up to normal shoe height and leather the rest of the way, designed to be worn with two pairs of heavy socks." ★

Leather boots like this pair from an 82nd Airborne paratrooper were no help in preventing frostbite and trench foot in snowy conditions.

CARA AMERICAN HERITAGE COLLECTION





Snow-draped Bastogne sat behind a semicircular shield of McAuliffe's dug-in 101st Division paratroopers—the 501st, 502nd, and 506th Parachute Infantry regiments, plus the 327th Glider Infantry and one battalion of the 401st Glider Infantry. The town was overrun with blackened tanks, half junked vehicles of all types, and remnants of innumerable broken commands—survivors of sharp fights at Longvilly, Noville, and other nearby villages. McAuliffe combined these orphan troops into a bastardized force dubbed Team Snafu. The team boasted a fearsome lineup of heavy guns—even two battalions of 155mm Long Toms—that commanded Bastogne's numerous approaches. McAuliffe had also collected the mobile 705th Tank Destroyer Battalion, remnants of Colonel William Roberts' Combat Command B of the 10th Armored, and some 9th Armored Division tanks. Roberts, initially working together with McAuliffe, scraped together three ready response

approached the American lines with a white flag and a request for the town's surrender. Glancing at the note in his command post, McAuliffe said simply "Aw, nuts!" Urged on by his subordinates, he put his response on paper. If the expression initially baffled the Germans, they got its meaning soon enough.

FOR THE HUNGRY, AMMUNITION-STARVED, and poorly supplied Americans shivering in trenches around Bastogne, life was hard. Clothing dampened by sweat or swirling mist by day stiffened into icy armor at night. To help keep warm, they slipped blankets from the dead. Heavy winter boots were scarce, and men slept atop their thin-skinned leather combat boots to keep them from icing over. They regularly removed their socks to rub their feet. Still, scores lost blackened toes and even whole feet to frostbite and trench foot.



Sergeant Lyle Greene of Rochester, Minnesota (left), chats with Staff Sergeant Joseph DeMott of Greenwood, Indiana (center), and Private First Class Fred Mozzoni of Chicago. The men are battling their way back from around Malmedy, Belgium, on the Bulge's north arc.

teams from these scraps: one of eight tanks, one of light tanks and tank destroyers, and one of machine-gun-armed, infantry-lugging halftracks at the town's perimeter, where blood-sniffing units of the Panzer *Lehr* Division and the 26th *Volksgranadier* Division (a "people's infantry" division, smaller and equipped with short-range weapons and old equipment) were circling.

Short on artillery and increasingly pressed for time, Manteuffel's half-committed officers played into McAuliffe's hands by launching only piecemeal attacks on his thin but keen-edged ring at villages such as Noville, Bizory, and Marvie. Nevertheless, at 11:30 A.M. on December 22, Panzer *Lehr* officers

Kept in business by rare but timely airdrops, the GIs somehow made do. McAuliffe's wisecrack reply to the German surrender demand raised their spirits. That, plus their own stout work and word of Patton's approach from the south helped them maintain a grim sense of humor. "Three cooks in C Battery took a little time from their regular chores to kill two Germans in a tank with a grenade, and captured six others," read one entry in an artillery unit logbook.

Nine days into Watch on the Rhine, the "Bulge," as Prime Minister Winston Churchill dubbed the German salient, resembled a giant nose, with its bridge around Butgenbach, its tip just short of the Meuse, and its base stretching across Luxembourg.

BATTLE OF THE BULGE

THE YANKS PUSH BACK • SIDE STORY



THE GENERAL WHO SAID 'NUTS!'

THE SIEGE OF BASTOGNE WAS a crowning moment in the 101st Airborne Division's illustrious career. Surrounded, outnumbered, and outgunned by enemy forces, the 101st boldly held its ground, defying its would-be captors. In the process, the Screaming Eagles denied the Germans a critical transportation hub, instead securing it for the Allies and hastening the end of the Battle of the Bulge.

But the man who led the 101st in this moment of glory—the man who said “NUTS!” to the Germans—wasn't the division's commander. It was Brigadier General Anthony C. “Tony” McAuliffe, the division's artillery commander.

Earlier in December 1944, the 101st Airborne's commander, Major General Maxwell Taylor, had been summoned to the States to meet with US Army Chief of Staff General George C. Marshall. He left McAuliffe in charge while the hard fighting division took a much-deserved rest at Reims, France—its first since D-Day.

No sooner did Taylor touch down in Washington than all hell broke loose in the Ardennes. The Screaming Eagles' break was over. With McAuliffe in command, they headed for Bastogne, a major market and crossroads town in the Ardennes that the Germans wanted for its ready access to major roads.

The 101st's job was to hold onto Bastogne while US tank units jockeyed to create a shield of fire and armor between

the Germans and the town. Panzer units were engaged in similar efforts to flank the Americans and get at Bastogne. Finally, on December 22, a powerful German infantry force broke through the town's outer defenses.

Around 11:30 A.M. that day, German Lieutenant Hellmuth Henke, accompanied by three other German soldiers, approached the 101st's position under a flag of truce. Henke delivered a typed message from the German infantry commander demanding that the Americans surrender.

When McAuliffe got the message, he blurted out, “Aw, nuts!” His division had just received fresh supplies by air the day before, thanks to a brief clearing in the wintry weather. The US forces in and around Bastogne had already held on for nearly a week, and McAuliffe was sure they could hold on longer. So, as he pondered a written response to the enemy commander, he returned to his original gut reaction and put it in print: “To the German Commander: NUTS!

The American Commander.”

In the ensuing combat, the Screaming Eagles more than backed up McAuliffe's irreverent reply. Relief came the day after Christmas. Tanks and foot soldiers from Lieutenant General George Patton's Third Army broke through the German lines, connected with the 101st, and lifted the Siege of Bastogne. The Screaming Eagles were heroes, and McAuliffe, their wise-cracking temporary commander, received the Distinguished Service Cross. ★



PATCH: COURTESY OF THE RANKS COLLECTION

The man who said “NUTS!” to the Germans—Brigadier General Anthony C. McAuliffe—smiles after winning at Bastogne. The artillery chief of the 101st Airborne (patch, above), he was in temporary command of the division when Germans besieged the town.

CHAPTER FOUR • THE YANKS PUSH BACK

WHITE-CLAD MEN AND A SNOW-COVERED SHERMAN TANK of Company C, 740th Tank Battalion, in the 82nd Airborne's 504th Parachute Infantry, push through a snowstorm near Herresbach, Belgium, in January 1945. They are advancing toward enemy lines about 10 miles northeast of St. Vith, steadily regaining ground lost in the German blitz.





German troops were nearly within shouting distance of British XXX Corps tank men watching them warily from bridges opposite Dinant. But the Germans were running out of fuel, ammunition, and luck. At Elsenborn Ridge, Hodges's mix of 99th, 2nd, and 1st Division troops had stopped Dietrich cold, forcing Hitler to redirect him west toward Manhay. Twenty-five miles west, 740th Tank Battalion, 82nd Airborne Division, and 30th Division

units had driven Peiper's murderous command out of Stavelot and into a trap at La Gleize.

ON CHRISTMAS EVE, MOTHER NATURE and the fortunes of war bestowed two precious gifts on the Allies. The first was clearing skies that welcomed armor-hunting waves of Ninth Air Force planes. The second was a clear shot at the drift-



Above: To safeguard recovered terrain against fresh enemy incursions, Private John B. Brady of the 207th Combat Engineer Battalion attaches explosives to a tree on December 29. If the enemy approaches, engineers can blow the charge, causing the tree to fall and block the road.

Center: Near the Salm River on January 10, 75th Infantry Division men move out to relieve the battle-weary 82nd Airborne Division on the north arc of the Bulge. **Opposite:** Six days later, Private First Class Gerald A. Cohan of the 75th Division's 289th Infantry is set up in a window with his .30-caliber machine gun, guarding the approaches to Salmchateau, on the Salm River about halfway back to the original US line.

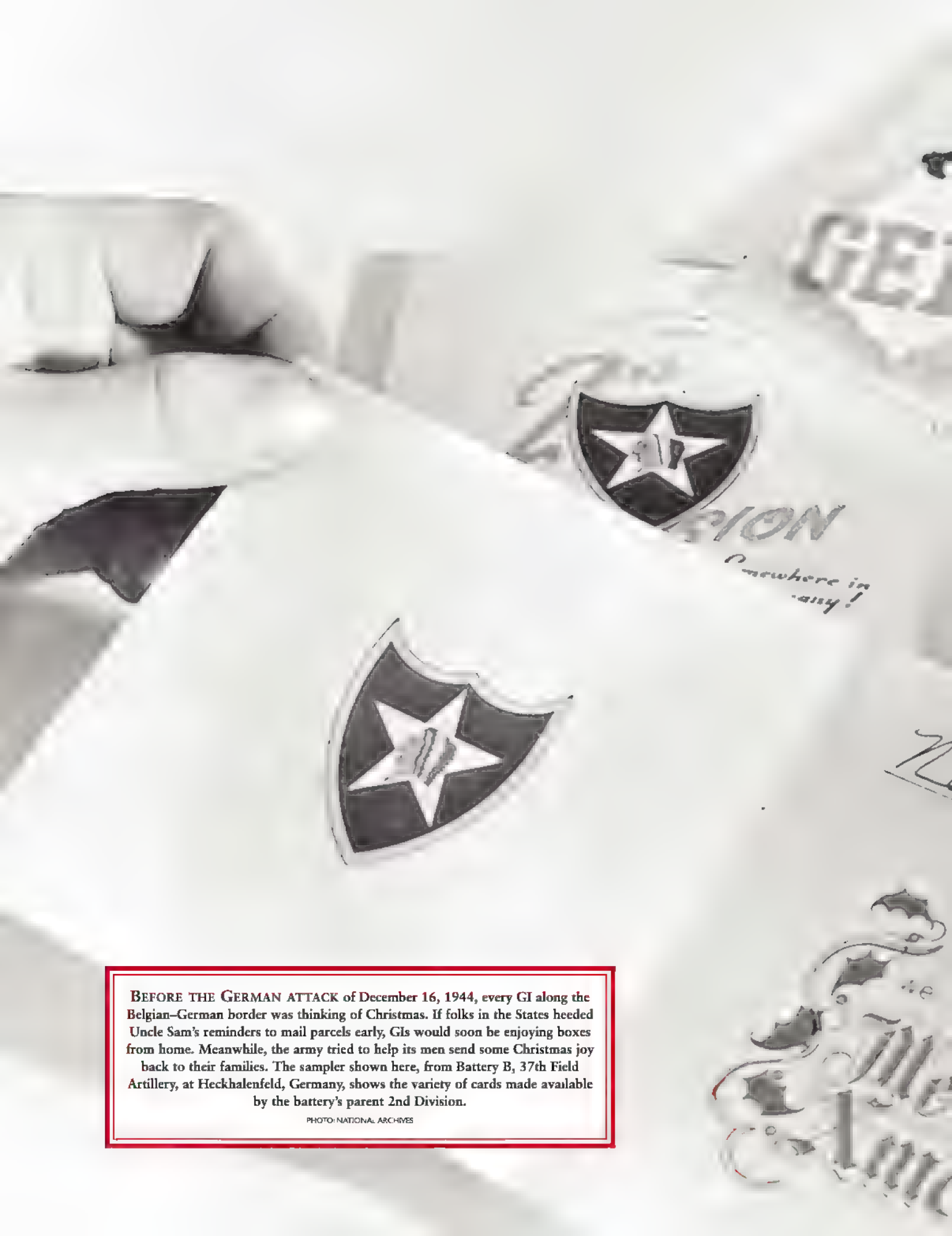


THIS ARTICLE FIRST APPEARED IN AMERICA IN NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 2009

ing van of Manteuffel's Fifth Panzer Army, whose 2nd Panzer Division tanks had crept to within six miles of the Meuse on little more than fumes. The chance to smash these soon to be sitting ducks made US VII Corp commander Collins chafe. Still sitting on the armored force that Montgomery had reserved for a counterattack, Collins was tempted to unleash Major General Ernest Harmon's restless 2nd Armored Division. After weighing Montgomery's explicit instructions to avoid contact, Collins gave Harmon (whom one reporter called "the most aggressive gamecock in the American tank force") the green light.

As Harmon wheeled to his attack, McAuliffe's staff in Bastogne marked the holiday with a circular celebrating the town's defense. "We are giving our country and our loved ones at home a worthy

Christmas present and being privileged to take part in this gallant feat of arms are truly making for ourselves a Merry Christmas," it declared. But the holiday could hardly lighten the gloom of war. Bewildered Belgians celebrated in cramped basements of shell-pocked buildings, sharing scraps of food and jostling for warmth. *Washington Post* correspondent Collie Small wrote that below town "it seems that a score of small battles are swirling through the nearby woods and across the snowy fields." And back home, *The Nation* weekly editorialized, "Most Americans did some hard thinking about the meaning of peace and war. For the lightning thrusts of the Panzers had caught off guard not only the forces of our First Army but also a complacent public for whom the war was all but won." ★



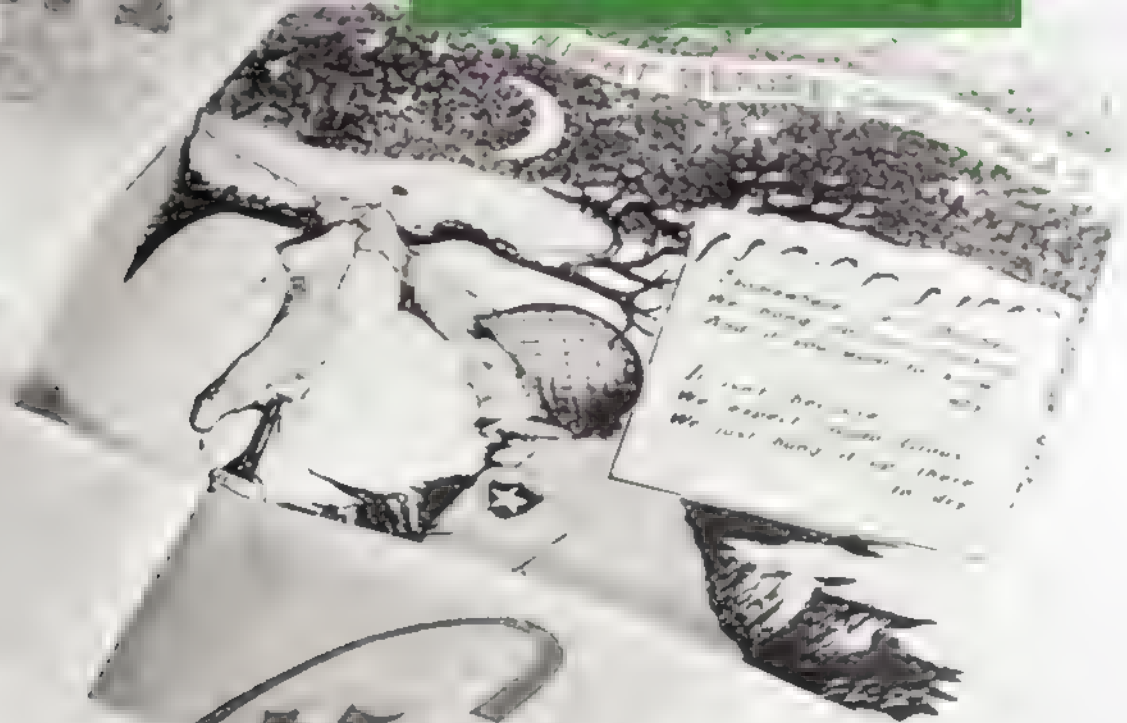
BEFORE THE GERMAN ATTACK of December 16, 1944, every GI along the Belgian–German border was thinking of Christmas. If folks in the States heeded Uncle Sam’s reminders to mail parcels early, GIs would soon be enjoying boxes from home. Meanwhile, the army tried to help its men send some Christmas joy back to their families. The sampler shown here, from Battery B, 37th Field Artillery, at Heckhalenfeld, Germany, shows the variety of cards made available by the battery’s parent 2nd Division.

PHOTO: NATIONAL ARCHIVES

THE YANKS PUSH BACK SIDE STORY

Christmas In The Bulge

ARMY



Nevertheless
from
SOMEWHERE IN
GERMANY

SOMEWHERE IN
GERMANY

WISH FOR A

ADRIAN B. BERMAN

**JAMES
ADAMS—
GERMAN**



THE ENJOYMENT OF CHRISTMAS was something the American liberators had in common with their hosts in Belgium and Luxembourg. Below: On December 5, the eve of St. Nicholas Day, the 28th Division put on a spectacle for the kids of Wiltz, Luxembourg. St. Nicholas (played by Private Richard Brookins) arrived by jeep. Above, left: Inside Germany just before the Battle of the Bulge, Private First Class Allen Kohlwaies of the 24th Engineers takes a holiday photo with war trophies, a Christmas card, and perhaps the world's tiniest Christmas tree. Above, right: In Heckhalenfeld, Germany, two Texans share a taste of home in the mess hall of Battery B, 37th Field Artillery. Opposite: Fresh from his mortar position in Belgium on January 21 during the Battle of the Bulge, Sergeant William Rush stops his jeep to receive a late-arriving Christmas box—and graciously shares a Hershey bar.

PHOTOS: NATIONAL ARCHIVES





BATTLE OF THE BULGE

THE YANKS PUSH BACK
SIDE STORY

Hitler's Fuel Crisis



BLITZKRIEG—LIGHTNING WAR—was Nazi Germany's calling card. Luftwaffe planes sliced through other countries' air space to rain bombs and bullets. On the ground, tanks, halftracks, motorized guns, and other armored vehicles, plus trucks, cars, even motorcycles, swept across borders in a flash. Railroads brought more troops, and massive long-range guns. For nations that became targets of such speedy and efficient aggression, defense was virtually impossible.

This "start your engines" approach to war was all well and good for sudden takeovers. But sustained military struggle meant *keeping* those engines running, and that required a reliable source of fuel—something Adolf Hitler's Germany had trouble securing. In fact, the scarcity of fuel would directly impact Hitler's blitzkrieg offensive in the Ardennes, cutting short the German armored columns' ability to hold onto the ground they had temporarily grabbed.

The Third Reich had gone to great lengths to secure fuel for the war, because domestic production yielded only a fraction of what was needed. Failure in Operation Barbarossa, the Russian Campaign of June–December 1941, came with a corresponding failure to capture and hold the USSR's main oil fields and refineries—though Germany managed to harvest some 4.7 million barrels of Soviet oil before beating retreat. Annexing Austria had put more petroleum at Hitler's disposal, but it still wasn't enough.

The game-changer for Hitler seemed to be Romania. Officially allied with Nazi Germany, Romania had numerous oil fields and refineries, and the Danube River provided an ideal artery for transporting their output to Germany. In the first half of 1944 alone, Romania provided 7 million barrels of oil to the Third Reich.

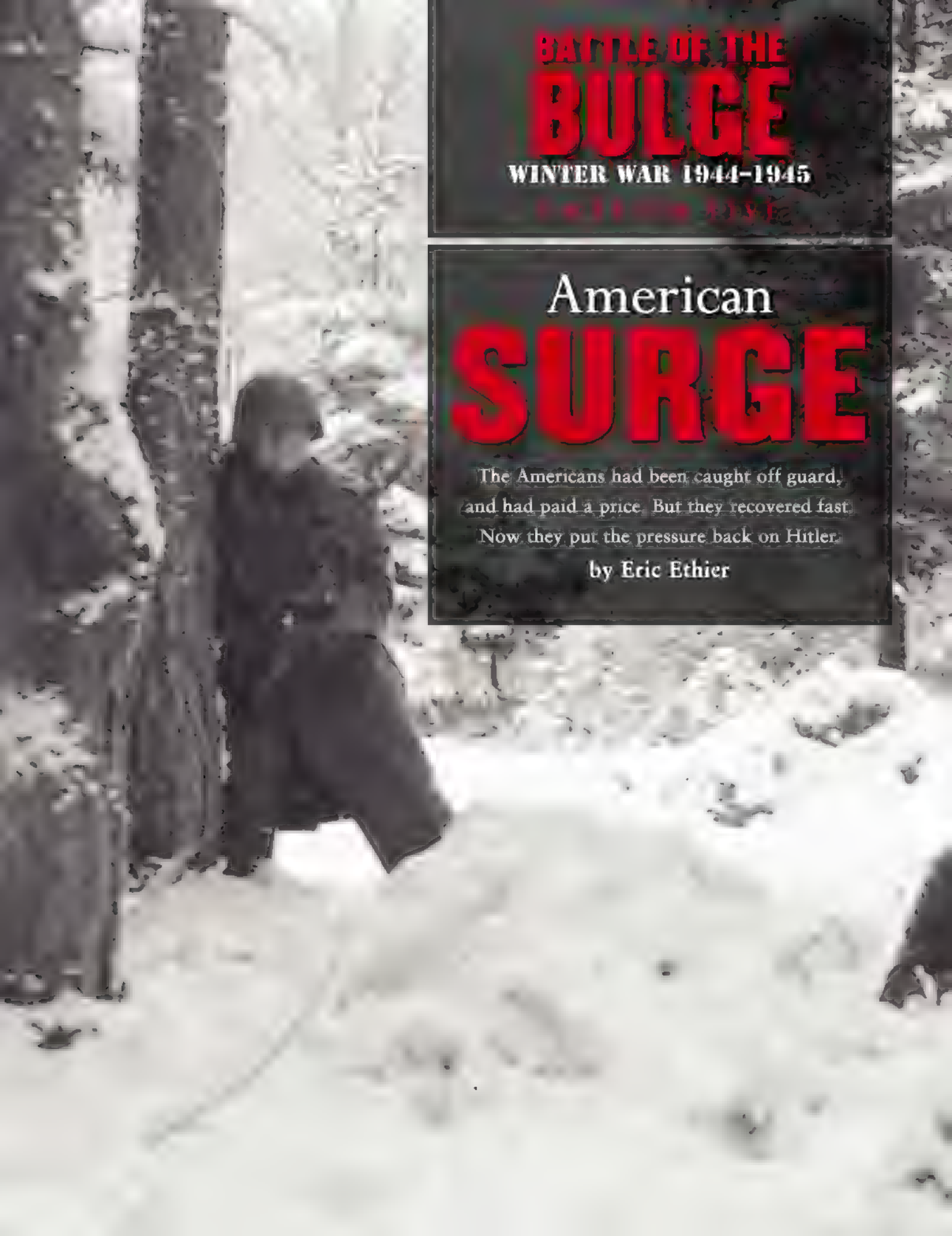
Alongside imported petroleum, Germany relied on synthetic fuel. Since the 1930s, scientists there had been working to perfect methods for creating liquid fuel from coal, a resource Germany had in abundance. These synthetic fuels played an important role in powering the Reich's military machinery.

But even taken together, all these sources failed to provide the steady flow of fuel that Hitler needed in order to hold on to his conquered Fortress Europe, which encompassed nearly everything from the Atlantic Ocean to the Russian border. And Allied air attacks on Romania's oil fields, on Danube River ship traffic, and on synthetic fuel plants in Germany kept Hitler from solving his fuel problem. That, in turn, helped the Allies solve their own problem: Hitler.

Some of Hitler's fuel goes up in flames on August 1, 1943, as US planes bomb the refineries of Ploesti, Romania. This B-24 Liberator has just dropped its payload on the Astra Romana refinery.

PHOTO: NATIONAL ARCHIVES





BATTLE OF THE **BULGE**

WINTER WAR 1944-1945

Volume 309

American **SURGE**

The Americans had been caught off guard,
and had paid a price. But they recovered fast.
Now they put the pressure back on Hitler.

by Eric Ethier





CHAPTER FIVE • AMERICAN SURGE



AFTER A WEEK OF TENSE SKIRMISHING, McAuliffe's tired troops spent Christmas morning in a series of nasty dog-fights, blasting panzers with bazookas, tank destroyers, and 105mm howitzers. In Champs, 502nd Parachute Infantry troopers fought off 26th *Volksgrenadier* Division troops with small arms and knives. At Hemroulle, dawn delivered mammoth, white-hulled Tiger tanks of the 15th *Panzer**grenadier* Division (a motorized infantry division with tanks) to the 327th Glider Infantry's hillside doorstep. "To the rear of the armor were men on foot," correspondent Fred MacKenzie later wrote. "They came up the hill in unstoppable numbers, hundreds of them, many yelling.

Macdonald [Captain Robert J. MacDonald of Co. B, Third Battalion] assumed they were drunk. Many fell under the fire that spewed from the foxholes and slit trenches at the top of the slope." Across Bastogne's northwestern perimeter, Mackenzie added, a "form of guerilla warfare was waged at intervals in some sectors by men mad with suffering and anxiety."

Relief was coming. Just before dusk on December 26, the tankers of Combat Command R, from Major General Hugh Gaffey's 4th Armored Division, powered through the town of Assenois in their M 4 Sherman tanks to make contact with 101st paratroopers, the "battered bastards of the bastion of Bastogne,"

as they now called themselves. The grueling siege was finally over. Lumbering C-47 Skytrains dropped medical supplies from sunny skies as trucks packed with food and ammunition rolled into town through a mile-wide corridor.

Back along the Meuse, after two days of hunting tanks, Harmon surrounded and pounced on the wounded 2nd Panzer Division and reinforcements from the Panzer *Lehr* and 9th Panzer divisions around Celles. "The Germans tried Trojan Horse tactics on us by leading one of their sorties with captured American vehicles," he later wrote. His tankers got a hand from British Typhoon fighters that dipped from clear skies to pound 70-ton Tiger tanks.

Previous spread: 29th Infantry Regiment men from the 75th Division engage the enemy in fresh snow near Amonines, Belgium, on January 4.

Top: On Christmas Eve, the 2nd Armored Division (whose patch this is) had helped turn the tide of battle by pounding the German Fifth Panzer Army's vanguard. Above, left: Two armies meet. On January 16 along the Ourthe River, a soldier in an M8 armored car, on patrol for the Third Army's 11th Armored Division, shakes hands with two GIs on patrol for the First Army's 84th Division. The meeting means the Bulge is closing. The Germans are in retreat. Above, right: On January 22, Americans scour the enemy from Wiltz building by building.



MEN OF THE 23RD ARMORED INFANTRY Battalion's Company C—part of the 7th Armored Division—work with a tank to clear buildings in the crossroad town of St. Vith, named after fourth-century martyr Saint Vitus, on January 23.

BATTLE OF THE BULGE

AMERICAN SURGE • SIDE STORY

The Siege-Cracker

FOR THE EMBATTLED 101ST AIRBORNE DIVISION, a full week into its defense of Bastogne, Belgium, news of relief came like a Christmas present. But this present was heralded not by jingling sleigh bells, but by the metallic clatter of tank treads on frozen ground.

The 101st Screaming Eagles had been hanging onto Bastogne, a tactically important road hub, since December 20. Isolated and surrounded, they had fought on, steadfastly refusing to surrender. Then, just before 5 P.M. on December 26, 1944, a modified M4 Sherman medium tank named *Cobra King* burst through German lines around Bastogne. Entering the 101st's defenses, the tank's crew made contact with men of Company A of the 101st's 326th Airborne Engineer Battalion.

Cobra King was from Company C of the 4th Armored Division's 37th Tank Battalion—part of Lieutenant General George S. Patton's Third Army. Behind her came a battered column of American armor and infantry. The American relief column had raced through the Belgian towns of Clochimont and Assenois under heavy fire, and with guns blazing had punched through German lines outside Bastogne. Now, with the enemy line compromised, the Siege of Bastogne was essentially over.

At the end of World War II in Europe, as some American troops shipped out for home and others settled into occupation duty in Germany, *Cobra King* seemed to disappear. But in December 2008 the historic tank reemerged. Experts confirmed that an old Sherman that stood at the back gate of the US Army's Rose Barracks at Vilseck, Germany, was in fact *Cobra King*. At some point, an incorrect registration number had been painted on the tank's hull, but the serial number proved this was truly the tank that broke through at Bastogne.

The army decided the venerable tank deserved a better fate. *Cobra King* was removed and sent to the Patton Museum at Fort Knox, Kentucky, for restoration work. The tank—which is actually a rare Sherman Jumbo M4A3E2 Assault Tank, with more armor than a normal Sherman, among other modifications—is currently undergoing further restoration at Fort Benning, Georgia.

Cobra King is reportedly destined to be displayed at the National Museum of the US Army, which is scheduled to open in June 2015 at Fort Belvoir, Virginia, south of Washington, DC. ☆

The five-man crew of the M4A3E2 Sherman Jumbo assault tank *Cobra King* pose for a triumphant photo with their siege-breaking war machine.



NATIONAL ARCHIVES



Hammered again the following day at Human, the 2nd Panzer retreated to lick its wounds.

To the north, Dietrich's rerouted 2nd SS Panzer Division had fought its way through 3rd and 7th Armored Division roadblocks at a hard luck village called Baraque de Fraiture to capture the hard-earned prizes of Manhay and Grandmenil. Now, US 82nd Airborne infantry drove the panzers out. Across the Bulge, the tide was turning.

Even as Eisenhower's armies gained firm footing in the Ardennes, the home front media was ripping Allied strategy and intelligence. "One is told that it is impossible for the Army to think defensively while operating offensively, or vice versa," *New York Times* correspondent Drew Middleton opined. "The Germans, however, appear to have managed to do this, for while on the defensive everywhere on a front of 450 miles they have produced one of the war's most important and best planned offensives."

designed to boost his sputtering Ardennes initiative. With confidence that struck his generals as borderline delusional, Hitler predicted a domino effect that would collapse Eisenhower's vigorous Ardennes effort. "Then we will see what happens," he said. "Then there will be 45 additional German divisions. I do not believe in the long run he can stand up to those. We will yet be masters of our fate." Attacking the American and French units of Lieutenant General Jacob Devers's Sixth Army Group before Strasbourg, on the Rhine River's western banks, a poorly supported force cobbled together from various panzer divisions stumbled to a halt after two weeks of futile battle.

As heavy snow blanketed the Ardennes, Allied generals turned the tables on Hitler's stalled armies. Under typically gray skies on January 3, Montgomery launched his long delayed counterattack from three sides. From the north, Hodges's reconstituted First Army (mostly Collins's VII Corps) jumped off across a 25-mile



Editors of the *New Republic* magazine called the crisis "a repeat, on a larger and deadlier scale, of what happened at Kasserine Gap, at the beaches of Salerno and the landing at Anzio."

HITLER STILL HAD A SURPRISE OR TWO LEFT. As the new year dawned, some 1,000 Luftwaffe planes zoomed out over the Siegfried Line in a last-ditch attempt to knock out Allied air power on the western front. By mid-morning his hoarded reserves had pounded 27 bases across Belgium, destroying some 300 Allied planes. But the tradeoff—a similar number of skilled German pilots and aircraft—was unbearable.

In the Alsace area 100 miles south of the Bulge, Hitler meanwhile launched Operation Nordwind, an unlikely offensive

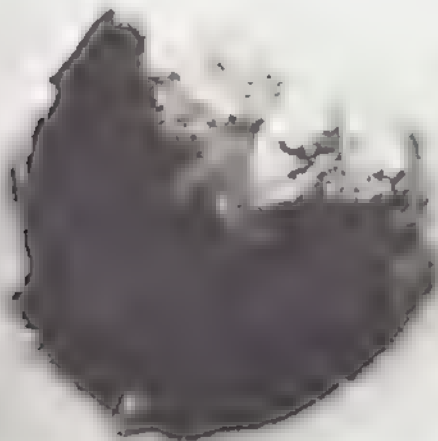
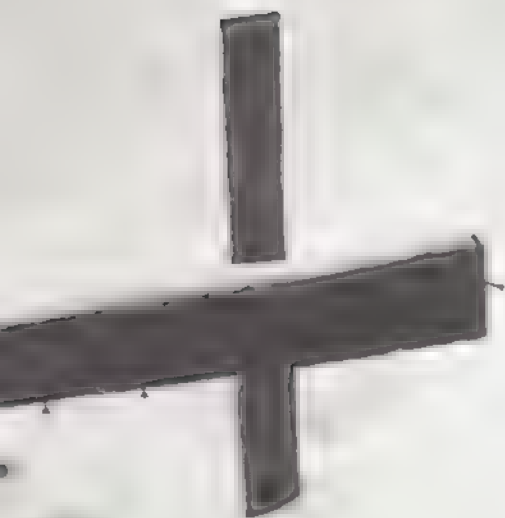
front. West of the Bastogne-Liege Highway, Harmon's 2nd Armored lugged the 84th Division's 335th Infantry south, followed by the balance of the 84th Division and the 75th Division's 290th Infantry. East of the highway, Major General Maurice Rose's 3rd Armored Division and the 83rd Division's 330th Infantry led the rest of the 83rd Division south toward Houffalize, while the 82nd Airborne plunged south to the left. And while the British 6th Airborne held the Bulge's nose, Patton kick-started his stalled drive north into Brandenberger's grudging Seventh Army.

That afternoon, after several days of half hearted lunges, the Germans launched one last, desperate attack on Bastogne, hammering at McAuliffe's 502nd Parachute Regiment north of town near Longchamps. Manteuffel tried again the next day, ignoring

Above: The 87th Infantry Division arrives in St. Hubert, Belgium, west of Bastogne, hot on the heels of the retreating Germans. Opposite: A GI guards German POWs captured in the Battle of the Bulge. About 21,000 Americans had been taken prisoner by the enemy during the fighting.

German figures are less clear, though overall German losses, including killed, wounded, missing, and captured, numbered as high as 100,000.





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hideous weather to snap at 6th Armored Division forces near Wiltz. But by now the Fifth Panzer Army commander was smashing fruitlessly into a thickening American wall.

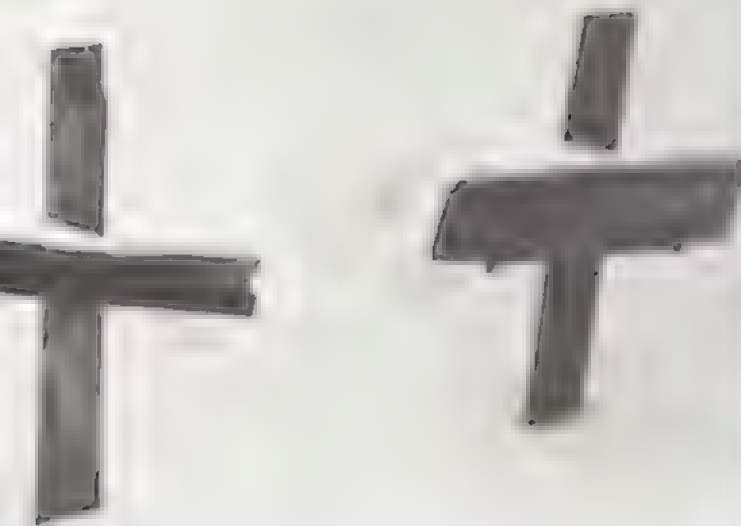
On January 8, Hitler authorized a withdrawal. For the Americans, the three-week battle gave way to a two-week all-out race for the spoils of Model's retreating armies. Swarming American GIs continued to rack up hard fought, campaign-sealing victories. At Bras on January 12, a combination of 90th and 35th Division GIs and 6th Armored tanks trapped 15,000 Germans, effectively ending the battle for Bastogne. Early on January 16, 2nd and 11th Armored Division task forces trudged into Houffalize, connecting the First and Third armies and cutting off another 20,000 German troops. A week later, elements of Clarke's battlesore 7th Armored commands secured bombed out St. Vith

THE BULGE WAS NO MORE. Across its smoke-charred highways and shell pocked crossroads, Belgian towns and villages lay in ruins. For the opposing armies, five weeks of winter combat had produced shocking carnage. American units had suffered 75,842 casualties, including 8,407 killed, 46,170 wounded, and nearly 21,000 captured. They lost perhaps 730 tanks and tank destroyers. British losses totaled 1,408, including 200 dead. Estimates of losses for the Germans ranged as high as 100,000, including at least 11,000 killed. They also lost 600 irreplaceable tanks and assault guns. The *Wehrmacht* was all but finished.



After the guns were silent and cold, observers from afar analyzed the intelligence gaffes that had presumably brought on the German attack. Survivors of the icy campaign wrestled with mental images of scenes etched forever in their souls at Bastogne, St. Vith, Elsenborn Ridge, and scores of anonymous Belgian villages where they had scrapped to buy time for the hard pressed soldiers behind them. Neither observers nor survivors could shake the haunting thought of all the blood that had been spilled. Never before and never again in this war did so many Americans fall in one battle. ★

ERIC ETHIER, a Rhode Island-born historian and freelance writer currently residing in Attleboro, Massachusetts, is the assistant editor of *America in WWII* magazine. Eric writes frequently about WWII battles and museums for our magazine, and has contributed articles since our second issue back in the summer of 2005.



CROSSES IN THE SNOW MARK GRAVES of 90th Division dead at Bavigne, Luxembourg, in mid-January 1945. Approximately 8,407 Americans lost their lives in the Bulge. Their sacrifice helped liberate Belgium and Luxembourg and ensure the end of Hitler's regime. Right: In Neux, Belgium, on January 26, Germaine Graffand her brother enjoy music courtesy of Technical Sergeant Joseph Gonzales of Buffalo, New York, and his portable phonograph.

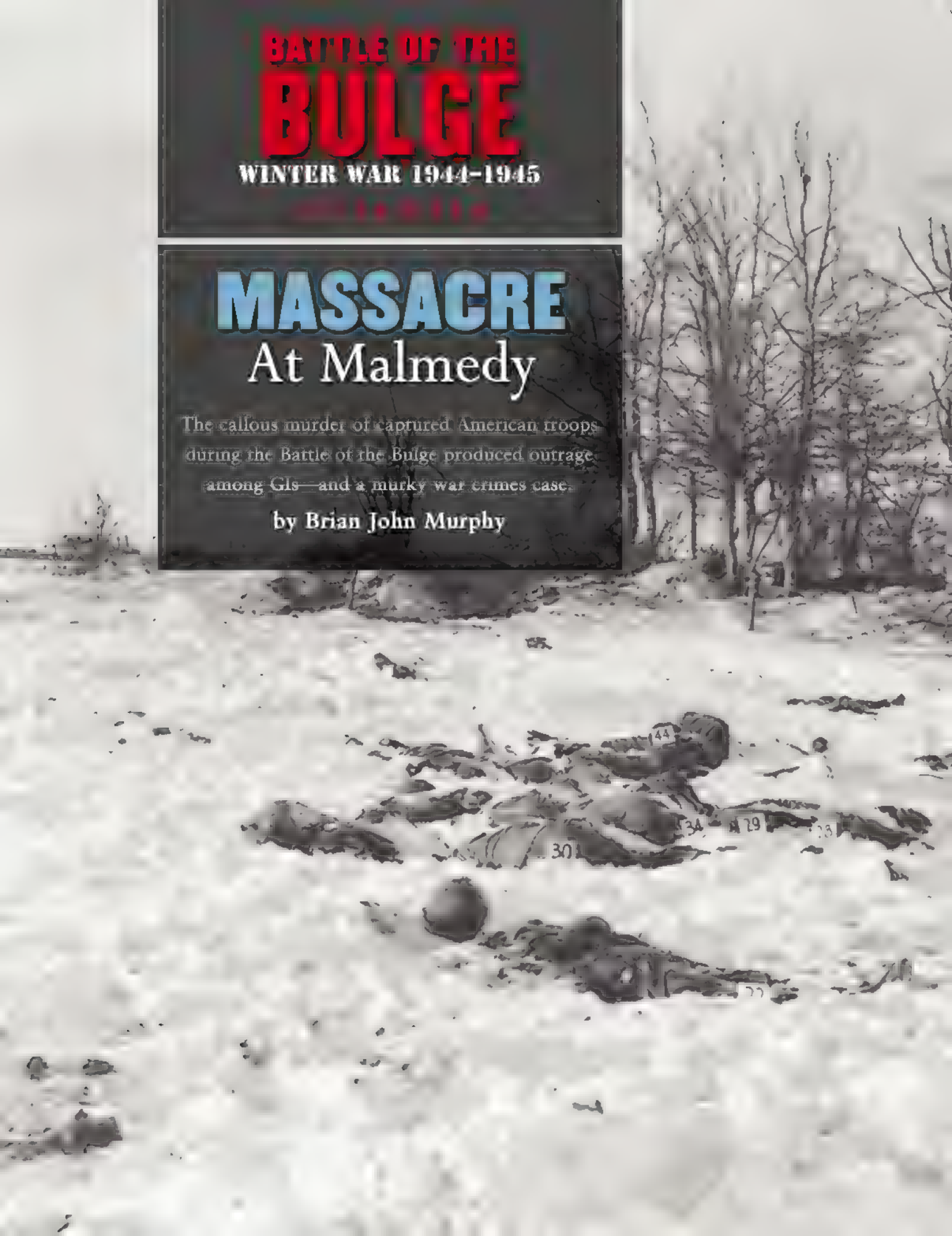
BATTLE OF THE **BULGE**

WINTER WAR 1944-1945

MASSACRE At Malmedy

The callous murder of captured American troops during the Battle of the Bulge produced outrage among GIs—and a murky war crimes case.

by Brian John Murphy





THE NAZIS WERE LOSING THE WAR in late 1944. As Christmas approached they made a bold drive to turn the tide back in their favor. But on December 16 the offensive codenamed Operation Watch on the Rhine was stalled.

Leading this German drive to the Meuse River and Antwerp, Belgium, was the 1st SS Division *Leibstandarte SS Adolf Hitler*, which had its origins as the führer's personal security regiment (*leibstandarte* roughly translates as "bodyguard"). At the front of the division, at the vanguard of the entire German offensive, was Lieutenant Colonel Jochen Peiper's *Kampfgruppe Peiper*, a mixed "combat group" of the *Waffen*, or "weapons" wing of the SS (*Schutzstaffel*, the Nazi Party's "protective squadron"). And at the moment, Peiper's vanguard was stuck—fully three miles behind the front line that he needed to pierce.

Peiper was unable to move his group up to Losheim until 4 P.M., so he left his planned route and headed instead for Lanzareth (Lanzerath), which paratroopers had just captured. En route, he lost three Panther tanks in US minefields, and the column stopped three times while engineers cleared mines.

Peiper arrived at Lanzareth at midnight in a foul mood. He was furious to see the paratroopers of the 9th *Fallschirmjäger* Regiment still in the village when they should have been advancing. The paratroops' officer, Helmut von Hofmann, explained that heavy American opposition lay waiting in the woods beyond. Peiper demanded—and got—a battalion of the 9th *Fallschirmjäger* for a probe into the woods.

The attack moved out at 4 A.M. on the 17th and hit...nothing. *Kampfgruppe Peiper* was through the American lines at last, free to make a run for the Meuse.

Before Peiper reached his objective, however, something horrible would happen, horrible even in the context of a horrible war. There would be a lot of dead Americans who should not have been killed, but more questions than answers would follow, and justice would run head on into politics.

A Promising Stormtrooper

JOACHIM "JOCHEN" PEIPER WAS BORN on January 30, 1915, and steeped in a family tradition of martial patriotism. After failing his college admissions test, he joined the Nazi *Waffen-SS* Cavalry in 1933 and then enlisted in the regular SS. He received his officer's commission in 1936.

Peiper was assigned to the *Leibstandarte SS Adolf Hitler*, the unit that guarded Hitler himself. Becoming an adjutant to SS head Heinrich Himmler, Peiper toured the Polish front in Himmler's entour-

age. For about a month during the spring 1940 invasion of France, he fought as a platoon and company commander in the 1st SS Panzer Division *Leibstandarte SS Adolf Hitler*, receiving the Iron Cross.

Peiper returned to Himmler's staff until the autumn of 1941, when he took command of a company and later a battalion in his old division on the Eastern front. The division drove 600 miles into the Soviet Union, stopped only by the Don River. Peiper rose to command of his battalion, dubbed the Blowtorch Battalion for its alleged incineration of Russian villages. In Russia, Peiper won the Knight's Cross of the Iron Cross (Nazi Germany's second-highest military honor), the German Cross in Gold, and Oak Leaves of the Knight's Cross.

He fought with his division in Italy in the summer and fall of 1943 (and was later accused of war crimes committed at that time). During the summer 1944 Normandy Campaign in France, Peiper's aggressive combat style cost his unit many casualties, including himself. Exhausted, he went home to recover. His next battle would be Watch on the Rhine, in Belgium's forested Ardennes region—a campaign Americans called the Battle of the Bulge.



The Americans

THE MEN OF THE US ARMY'S 285th Field Artillery Observation Battalion had been selected from around the United States and became the school battalion at Fort Sill, Oklahoma, training other artillery observers for combat. In September 1944 they stepped onto Normandy's Omaha Beach; by October they were inside the German frontier at Schevenhutte.

On December 17, the 285th's Battery B set out in a convoy to join the 4th Infantry Division's artillery in Luxembourg. The convoy, divided into two units with Captain Roger Mills and Lieutenant Virgil Lary commanding the first and Lieutenant Perry Reardon the second, included two- and a half-ton trucks, weapons carriers, and

jeeps. The column was to motor through Rott and Raere in Germany and Eynatten, Eupen, Malmédy, Ligneuville, and St. Vith in Belgium before crossing the Rhine into Luxembourg.

The convoy was entering Malmédy when Sergeant James Barrington became terribly ill from food poisoning. His truck, with eight other men in it, pulled over. Three more vehicles, carrying 17 more enlisted men and an officer, also pulled over. The rest of the convoy moved on and was soon out of sight. Barrington's illness would turn out to be a blessing for him and the 25 men with him.

The Germans

KAMPFGRUPPE PEIPER RACED WEST. At 6 A.M. it sped through Honsfeld, where a US reconnaissance battalion slept. Further west an

Previous spread: Initially barred from publication by army censors, this photo shows exhumed bodies of US soldiers massacred at Malmédy, Belgium, during the Battle of the Bulge in December 1944. The men, 84 in all, were slaughtered after surrendering. Above: Charged with this crime were 73 men of the SS unit *Kampfgruppe Peiper* and the unit's commander, Lieutenant Colonel Jochen Peiper, pictured in this end-of-war mug shot. Opposite: At the start of the Watch on the Rhine blitz, a *Kampfgruppe Peiper* officer studies a map at a bombed-out crossroads 13 kilometers (8 miles) from Malmédy. The actual massacre site was the five-point crossroads at Baugnez, 2.5 miles southeast of Malmédy.



armored lead detachment captured a convoy of eight American supply trucks. Next came Bullingen, where Peiper's men captured an airfield, destroyed some spotter planes, and seized a gasoline dump. American POWs fueled Peiper's vehicles and filled fuel cans from 50,000 gallons of captured gas. *Kampfgruppe Peiper* then moved out, passing through Moderscheid, Schoppen, Ondenval, and Thirimont en route to the five-way Baugnez crossroads south of Malmédy.

The Massacre

THE EXACT SEQUENCE OF EVENTS at the Baugnez crossroads from about 1 to 3 P.M. on December 17 is uncertain. According to one account, at about 1 P.M. Battery B (minus the four trucks that stopped with Barrington) approached Baugnez from the north after leaving Malmédy. Private First Class Homer Ford of the military police was standing opposite Café Bodarwe near the crossroads, directing traffic. He waved the convoy through, onto the road leading to Ligneuville and St. Vith. To the east, on the road from Thirimont, two German

SPW armored personnel carriers and a pair of Mark IV tanks crested a rise, giving the SS men a panoramic view of the Americans heading south, completely unaware of enemy presence.

THE SS DEPLOYED OFF THE ROAD and opened fire. The first 75mm shell blew the front wheels off one of the lead American vehicles. A tank machine-gunned an ambulance at the rear of the column. Battery B's vehicles stopped in a jumble. Rounds from machine guns mounted on an SPW tore through the American trucks. Lieutenant Lary, in the lead jeep, saw there was no going forward or back. He, Captain Mills, and other survivors took cover in a drainage ditch to their right as German bullets buzzed overhead like hornets, and 75mm shells demolished the vehicles. Private Ford and 15 to 20 men in the vicinity of Café Bodarwe made a break for safety in a barn behind the tavern, but the SS arrived minutes later, threatening to riddle the barn with their burp guns. The GIs emerged quietly and were led to a holding area in a field next to the café.

Technician Fifth Grade Warren Schmitt evacuated the ditch where he was taking shelter and crawled to a little stream 40 feet from the road. He immersed himself in the bitterly cold water, splattered himself with mud, and lay down, hoping he looked convincingly dead.

Staff Sergeant Bill Merriken dove into the ditch. After a few minutes, he recalled, "A tank came, with its machine gun firing at the ditches." Merriken heard Lary call out, "Surrender, boys." As the Americans began to rise, other tanks turned left onto the

By 2 P.M. there were some 114 American prisoners in the field by the café. Merriken saw German SPW crews pointing their machine guns at the prisoners. He remembered seeing an officer stand up on an SPW, take careful aim with his pistol, and fire into the crowd of POWs. Then the German machine guns opened up. It was 2:20 P.M.

Lary later accused SS Stormtrooper Georg Fleps of firing the first shot. Fleps claimed he was acting on orders of Senior Squad Leader Hans Siptrott, but Siptrott categorically denied this after the war. Siegfried Jackel, who admitted to participating in the shooting, said an officer named Beutner had given the order and fired the first shots.

LEUTENANT CARL GENTHNER of the 575th Ambulance Company was the first POW hit. All the men dropped to the snow-covered earth as the German guns raked the field again and again. Some GIs died at once; others fell mortally wounded. Other wounded men dropped and played dead, including Sergeant Ken Ahrens. Lying face first in the snow, Ahrens was hit by several machine gun rounds. Private First Class Ralph Law took a machine-gun slug in the left leg as he lay in the field, playing dead with his face in the snow.

About 20 SS men went out into the field to give "mercy" shots to the wounded. Genthner, lying wounded, spoke in German to a few of them. The Germans pumped three bullets into him. A GI lying near Law was crying out with pain. There was a single shot and the cries ceased. Corporal Ralph J. Indelicato, a medic with the red cross brassard on his arm and a helmet conspicuously marked with red crosses in white circles, got up to tend the wound of Private First Class Carl Stevens. An SS man ambled over to watch the aid being given. When Indelicato finished packing and dressing the wound, the German shot both him and Stevens dead.

Technician Fifth Grade Kenneth Kingston was playing dead when one of the SS men came over to loot him. Stealing Kingston's watch, the German felt a pulse. He pointed his pistol at Kingston's head. As he began to pull the trigger, someone called out, spoiling his aim. The bullet entered Kingston's helmet but missed his head.

Private Jim Mattera was yet another American playing dead in the snow. He heard a German say, "Hey Joe. You hurt? I'm here to help you, Joe...." No answer. Then, "Hey John, you hurt?" A GI replied, "Yeah I'm hurt. I need help!" *Boom* went the German's pistol.

As the afternoon wore on, more vehicles of Peiper's column passed by the site. As they did, they fired machine-gun and pistol rounds into the Americans lying in the field. About 600 vehicles passed through. Eventually, most of the SS men detailed to guard the POWs got in their vehicles and moved on.

The Survivors

AFTER AN HOUR PASSED, a few of the survivors dared to get up and run for it. Merriken headed northwest, with wounds in his back and leg. It took him two days to make the short trip to the US hospital in Malmédy. When Law got up to run, SS men were still on the scene and fired on him, so he dropped in a ditch. A German kicked him, but Law played dead. He stayed in the ditch until almost midnight before he was convinced it was safe to move. He reached the US lines and a hospital in Liège. Lary made it to the village of Florheid, where a family took him in and got him to



Ligneuville road, where their machine guns could enfilade the ditch. More Americans surrendered. The prisoners were directed, hands raised, into the field next to the café property. Private Peter Phillips apparently did not raise his arms high enough to please his SS guards, and they put three bullets in his back.

The first SS unit on the scene left for Ligneuville as the main body of *Kampfgruppe Peiper*, including Peiper himself, motored through the intersection and down the Ligneuville-St. Vith road. Peiper called out jokingly to the captured Americans as he passed by, "It's a long way to Tipperary." The Germans pushed the disabled American vehicles off the road and drove away in the salvageable ones, taking seven POWs to drive the six-wheel drive trucks.

Malmedy. Schmitt played dead in the icy creek for several hours before daring to crawl away, reaching Malmedy late that night. Kingston and Ahrens also made it to Malmedy.

The survivors reaching Malmedy had stories to tell, and those stories spread fast. Word that the SS was killing prisoners spread through the Ardennes battlefield with astonishing speed. The incident, later known as the Malmedy Massacre, soon became the best known German atrocity of the war to that point. The news helped stiffen US resistance—and persuaded some American soldiers not to take prisoners.

Out of Gas

ON CHRISTMAS EVE, Peiper's advance to the Meuse literally ran out of gas at the town of La Gleize. Pressed by advancing US forces, the Peiper survivors climbed down from their monstrous Panther, Mark IV, Tiger, and King Tiger tanks and began the long walk through the snows of Belgium back to the German lines. Of Peiper's battle command of 5,000 men, only about 800 survived Operation Watch on the Rhine.



GIs carefully unload the frozen body of a Malmedy Massacre victim from a truck after transport from Baugnez to Malmedy for identification and examination. At the war's end, the US Army would seek to identify and charge members of *Kampfgruppe Peiper* for the brutal killings.

The Dead

ON JANUARY 13, 1945, Americans reoccupied the Baugnez crossroads. Quartermaster troops began to dig out the dead, scattering every so often as German artillery harassed them. Frozen and preserved in the positions they died in, the bodies were numbered, photographed, loaded onto trucks, and brought to a morgue set up in Malmedy. On arrival, they were thawed, photographed again, and autopsied. Among the findings were that 19 of the dead were killed by machine-gun and small arms fire from a distance and 40 were killed by close-up shots to the head. Four GIs bled to death, three had their heads bashed in, and three were crushed. There were 72 original autopsies. When additional bodies were found near the massacre site in the spring, 13 more postmortems were conducted.

Military Justice

WITH A SENSE OF IRONY, the US Army selected the Dachau concentration camp 50 miles outside Munich as the location for war crimes proceedings. There, Peiper, General Josef "Sepp" Dietrich, commander of the Sixth SS Panzer Army in which *Kampfgruppe Peiper* had served, and 72 other SS officers and men from Peiper's command faced charges before a "military government court."

Only one of the judges, Colonel Abraham H. Rosenfeld, was a trained lawyer. He decided all interpretations of the law and the rules of procedure. The president, Brigadier General Josiah T. Dalby, and the rest of the court heard evidence, assessed guilt or innocence, and fixed punishment based on a two-thirds vote. Each judge's vote was kept secret.

HEARSAY AND OPINIONS were admitted as evidence. Evidence from witnesses paid to testify was allowed. Affidavits from witnesses were admitted without the defendants being able to confront the sources. Unsigned affidavits were allowed. Even if a defendant risked the death penalty, he could be

condemned by just a two-thirds vote.

Prosecutor Lieutenant Colonel Burton F. Ellis, who had never tried a case before, opened the proceedings against the SS men on May 16, 1946. The indictment covered the Malmedy Massacre and the alleged murder, torture, and abuse of American POWs numbering in the unspecified hundreds, as well as the massacre of Belgian civilians, in incidents all along Peiper's advance, occurring "at sundry times between 16 December 1944 and 13 January 1945."

The Waffen SS men could not have asked for a more fervent defender than their army lawyer, Colonel William M. Everett, Jr., also a newcomer to trial procedure. On the first day he made an emotional appeal for the defendants. He did not deny crimes were committed, but argued that the trial should be as fair as in a civil-



ian court in the United States

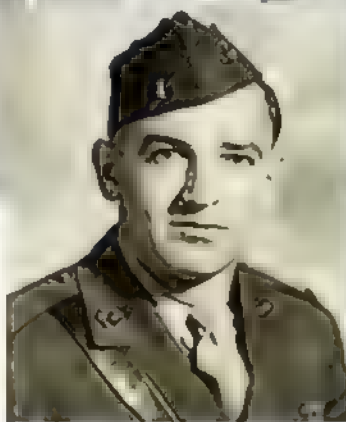
For several days Ellis presented statements linking the SS men to Malmédy and the other alleged incidents. Malmédy survivors also testified. Lary, now a student at the University of Kentucky, described his ordeal and identified Fieps as the man who had fired the first shots.

He also described the SS men laughing as they walked among the fallen POWs, putting bullets into the heads of wounded men.

The court, especially Rosenfeld, resented any attempt by Everett to vigorously cross-examine survivors. Everett came to the conclusion that the whole trial was a farce. He had a point. Incredibly, he had been denied pretrial access to some 100 prosecution affidavits, essentially the entire case against the SS men. As the trial opened, he was learning the details of the prosecution's case for the first time.

Everett found that an alleged massacre of 175 to 311 American troops and at least three Belgian civilians at La Gleize had perhaps never happened. There were no witnesses at the village. GIs reoccupying the town found no massacre fields like the one at Baugnez and no mass graves. The only evidence against the SS men was from their own ranks, statements that Everett believed were made under duress.

Everett put Lieutenant Colonel Hal McCown on the stand. He was held as a POW in a cellar in La Gleize with 135 other Americans. Far from being murdered or abused, McCown testified, the men were treated correctly and given rations.



Everett found that the pretrial interrogations of the SS prisoners included abusive treatment bordering on torture. Some prisoners capitulated and signed statements after promises of additional rations or clemency for themselves and their families. The more stubborn got harsher treatment, such as extreme psychological intimidation, threats against their families, mock trials, and simulated executions.

Some prisoners alleged they were beaten by their interrogators—everything from slaps and punches to the face to thorough beatings and the deliberate crushing of testicles.

When Peiper was put on the stand, he claimed he had signed statements confessing guilt in the case after he had seen that some of his men had been broken in the interrogations. He felt it was his duty, as commanding officer, to assume responsibility for the behavior of his men.

These revelations did nothing to alter the trial's results. All but one of the 74 prisoners were found guilty. Peiper and 42 others were sentenced to hang. At least 22 received life sentences. Two were given prison terms of 20 years. One got 15 years and 5 got 10.

Enter the Politicians

IN THE YEARS THAT FOLLOWED, Peiper and the other condemned SS men awaited execution at Bavaria's Landsberg prison while Everett and others, both German and American, continued to raise the issue of the defendants' treatment before the trial. Everett brought their case before the US Supreme Court and the Inter-

The Malmédy Massacre defendants and other Germans accused of war crimes were tried at the former Dachau concentration camp in Upper Bavaria, Germany. Here, Generals Fritz Kraemer (33) and Hermann Priess (45) and Peiper (next to Priess) listen as defense counsel Otto Leiling translates the lead defense attorney's closing argument. Inset: To get publicity, Senator Joseph McCarthy (shown as a marine in 1942) badgered American witnesses in the Malmédy case. The fuss saved Peiper from the noose.

national Court in the Hague.

The issue was closely watched in West Germany, which was being pressured by the Western Allies—the United States, Great Britain, and France—to revive the German army and help defend Europe against the Soviet Union. German Chancellor Conrad Adenauer informed the Americans that the imprisonment of the SS men and the expected executions of Peiper and the others would be a serious barrier to the requested cooperation in the Cold War.

Back in the States the fates of the SS men and the unresolved questions about the massacre led to the appointment of a special subcommittee of the Senate Armed Forces Committee in 1949. Raymond Baldwin, a highly respected Republican senator from Connecticut, was appointed to chair the panel. Republican Senator Joseph McCarthy of Wisconsin sat in on the hearings.

McCarthy had not yet made much of a mark in the senate; he was looking for an issue to get his name in the headlines. He also

tee!" McCarthy's over-the-top performance persuaded Secretary of the Army Kenneth Royall to order a stay of execution for 12 convicted Germans who were scheduled to be hanged in a few days.

Everett, long since a civilian again, kept up the pressure for his clients. In 1951 the last six Germans still facing execution had their sentences commuted to life in prison by General Thomas Hardy, commander of the US Seventh Army. Peiper wrote to Everett from Landsberg prison, "In all the long and dark years you have been the beacon flame for the forlorn souls of the Malmédy boys, the voice and conscience of the good America."

Afterward

GERMANY WAS NOT a welcoming place for Jochen Peiper after his release from prison in 1957 as the last of the German convicts to be set free. He started out washing cars. Later, Porsche, which once manufactured Panther tanks, hired him as a publicity manager but



Men of Company C, 291st Combat Engineers, conducted the search for human remains at Baugnez. The Battle of the Bulge wasn't over yet, and German shells still fell nearby from time to time. On January 16, 1945, they pause for a photo after performing their grim task.

represented a state that happened to have a large proportion of ethnic German voters. The Soviet Union's blockade of the Allied sectors of Berlin in a failed attempt to force the Allies to cede control had given Americans a newfound sympathy with the Germans. So the fate of the convicted SS men seemed like an exploitable issue.

McCarthy essentially took over the hearings from Baldwin. He aggressively questioned US Army witnesses and the former prosecutors. He accused Ellis of having made "a mockery of justice" and having used methods "so brutal as to be repulsive." He engaged in bombastic and sometimes ridiculous rhetoric, such as when he complained of the lack of chaplains for the SS prisoners, noting that there were Catholics, Protestants, and *Jews* among the stormtroopers, who needed religious consolation.

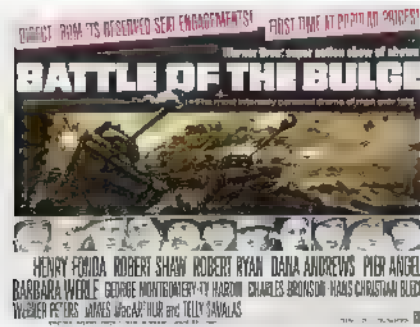
UNFORGIVABLY IN THE EYES OF SOME, McCarthy even leaned on survivors of the massacre who were brought in as witnesses. When Ahrens described how the SS laughed as they shot the wounded in their heads, McCarthy bellowed that Ahrens "was trying to inflame the public and the members of the commu-

let him go when workers objected to him as a war criminal. A similar job with Volkswagen lasted only until his reputation caught up with him. There was an attempt to try Peiper for war crimes committed in Italy, but the case was dropped in 1968.

In 1972 the embittered Peiper left Germany for self-imposed exile in France. In the early morning hours of July 15, 1976, while he was home alone in his home in Traves, unknown attackers with small arms and Molotov cocktails bombarded his house. Police found his shriveled, burned corpse in the ruins. He is buried in the family tomb in Schondorf am Ammersee, Bavaria.

The GIs murdered at the Baugnez crossroads are buried in the American Military Cemetery at Henri Chapelle, Belgium, and at military and private cemeteries in the United States. Sixty-five years later, the truth of what happened to them and who should have been held responsible remains unclear. ★

BRIAN JOHN MURPHY of Fairfield, Connecticut, is a contributing editor of *America* in WWII. He has written prolifically for the magazine since its first issue.



Botching The Bulge

In an age of great WWII films, Hollywood's tribute to the snowy hell in the Ardennes was bad enough to anger a former general and president.

by Brian John Murphy

Battle of the Bulge

Directed by Ken Annakin, written by Philip Yordan, Milton Sperling and John Melson, starring Henry Fonda, Robert Shaw, Robert Ryan, Dana Andrews, Charles Bronson, Telly Savalas, George Montgomery, and James MacArthur.
1965, 167 minutes, color, unrated.

CAPTURING THE EPIC SWEEP of a giant conflict like the Battle of the Bulge would be a tremendous challenge for any film. *Battle of the Bulge*, however, doesn't even *try* to meet that challenge.

Somehow, this major production that set out to "capture the spirit of the battle" seems wholly unrelated to the great battle that raged from mid December 1944 to mid January 1945. In fact, World War II veterans reacted with surprise and disapproval when *Bulge* premiered in 1965. No less a spokesman than General Dwight Eisenhower, WWII supreme Allied commander in Europe and former US president, called a press conference to blast *Battle of the Bulge* as a grossly inaccurate account of the battle.

Bulge's most obvious offense is its landscape. Belgium's Ardennes, scene of the real battle, is a series of forested hills and ridges, with occasional farms and villages. You can find landscapes like that in several states: California, Montana, and North and South Dakota come to mind. Instead, the movie was filmed in Spain's Sierra de Guadarrama desert. A desert for a battle defined by knee-deep snow!

The Battle of the Bulge was very much a tank battle. You might expect the film's director had taken pains to make the armor look right. Not so. To be fair, the movie's M24 Chaffees are adequate stand ins for M4 Shermans. But a Spanish Army M47 Patton bears little resemblance to the Germans' substantially larger Tiger II. The illusion is only slightly enhanced by the Pattons' gray paint and Iron Crosses. (Never mind that the Germans had painted their

tanks in camouflage patterns for the Ardennes offensive.)

Oh, and never mind the weather. The need for overcast skies to hide the tanks from Allied planes is mentioned once, then forgotten. There is no fog, no snow showers, no rain. It's just partly cloudy, sunny skies, and *not a single American, British, or German plane in the sky for the whole movie save one*: a 1949 Cessna Birdog standing in for a Piper Cub L-4 Grasshopper spotter plane.

In addition to omitting the battle's real landscape, weather, tanks, and air power, *Battle of the Bulge* leaves out the names—Bastogne, St. Vith, McAuliffe, Patton, Bradley, Montgomery, Hodges, Peiper, Dietrich... The omissions include everyone who was there and every geographic locality in the Ardennes except Malmédy and the Meuse River.

Henry Fonda plays an intelligence officer who spots a German buildup. Robert Ryan and Dana Andrews play a division commander and assistant chief of staff who refuse to listen. Charles Bronson is good as a heroic infantry officer. Telly Savalas plays a Sgt.-Bilko-type conniving tank noncom who has seemingly hoarded all the nylons and Mumm champagne in Europe to sell on the black market. Robert Shaw, his hair dyed blond, plays a combination of Colonel Joachim Peiper, General Josef "Sepp" Dietrich, and Every Movie Nazi You've Ever Seen. He's not hoping to win the war. He just wants the war and the killing to go on and on, unlike virtually any real soldier.

Bulge's plot is banal and the acting is, for the most part, mailed in. You'd do a lot better by watching William Wellman's *Battleground* (1949). While not completely free of clichés, it does attempt to tell the story of the Siege of Bastogne honestly. And it's not shot in a sunny desert. ★

Brian John Murphy of Fairfield, Connecticut, is a contributing editor of *America* in WWII magazine.



BATTLE OF THE BULGE (1965) WAS BELLED AS “the most intensely personal drama of men ever told” on movie posters (opposite, top). But not even stars like Henry Fonda (above)—who plays Lieutenant Colonel Dan Kiley, an intelligence officer who notices that the Germans seem to be getting ready for something big—can atone for the film’s epic inaccuracy.

BATTLE OF THE BULGE

WINTER WAR 1944-1945
BULGE MEMORIES

In Their Own WORDS

Personal stories of four veterans
who fought for victory and survival
in The Battle of The Bulge.

SHOOTING TOUR OF LUXEMBOURG

SERGEANT THOMAS W. "WALLY" CLARKE, of Baltimore, Maryland, had been wounded on December 1, 1944, fighting at Sarre-Union, in France along the Sarre (or Saar) River, with his 26th "Yankee" Division in Lieutenant General George Patton's Third Army. He returned from convalescence with the Battle of the Bulge already in progress, and joined his 101st Infantry Regiment in Luxembourg near the southern anchor of the stretched American line. Below are entries from his diary for the cold and dangerous days that followed his return.

January 7 to 13, 1945: "Combat again." For a change, we spent this week on the line with hardly any shelling of our positions. We overlooked the rifle companies below us, but at the same time, could build fires on the reverse slope where we were able to heat coffee and keep our feet warm. On the evening of the 12th, the battalion attacked and "C" Company was almost wiped out. "C" Company took a bad beating and lost all but 3 men in one platoon. However, pushing forward in the night, contact was made with the 3rd Battalion and we dug in new positions in the 18 inch snow for the remainder of the night, in a circle for protection. There was no definite front line.

Mail was received the next morning, among which was one from Kitty written the 5th of January and containing a postage size picture of her. By noon, we had pulled back and taken off for an unknown destination. We arrived at Bavigne, Luxembourg, and slept in holes dug previously by the 2nd platoon on the now famous Hill 390. Dead Germans were still there. Hobart Lott told me about the battle fought there on December 28, 1944. The

German paratroopers assaulted the hill all day from dawn to dusk. My machine gun, Gunner (Allen) and Assistant Gunner (Perry) were destroyed by a direct hit by an 88 shell [from a German 8.8cm Flak anti aircraft gun, which fired 88mm shells]. Corporal Cole was killed by a sniper. It was reported later that the Germans had been drugged to stimulate their attacks. Lott said they took off six truckloads of dead Germans, but there were many still there when we returned two weeks later. Of course, our casualties were high also.

January 14 to 20, 1945: During this third week of January, we held a defensive position about 2 miles outside of Wiltz overlooking the Wiltz River and valley. Dead bodies were still in their fox holes. Most were the 28th Division PA National Guard. Every day P 47's and P-38's [American Thunderbolt and Lightning fighters] came over and strafed the German supply lines while our artillery pounded them incessantly. The Germans did a good bit of shelling also and a certain crossroads between us and the Company CP was known as "Screaming Meemie Corner" or "88 Crossroads...."

January 21, 1945: Early this morning, the 2nd Battalion crossed the Wiltz River and started a push parallel to it on the left. Our Battalion pushed straight down the river in a blinding snow-storm and reached a high hill above Wiltz about 4 o'clock in the evening. Jerry [the Germans] had pulled out so we took off into town in high gear. The people wept with joy, picked up small twigs in our pathway and welcomed us with open arms. I went into one home with a friend of mine from "B" Company, at the request of one woman, and found two American soldiers from the 28th Division, one of which was a 1st Sgt., whom she had success-



SERGEANT THOMAS W. "WALLY" CLARKE (the tall GI on the right) relaxes with a group of jeep drivers in Wiltz, Luxembourg, in late January 1945. The Battle of the Bulge broke out while he was in the hospital healing up from a wound. He returned to his machine-gun squad in early January, with plenty of time to experience the hard knocks of the Bulge.



A snapshot Clarke brought home from the war shows friends from a mortar crew in his company, in action during the Battle of the Bulge near Bavigna, Luxembourg, on New Year's Eve, 1944. The men are sighting the mortar based on target information being received via field phone (right). Despite bitter cold, there are smiles to be seen.

fully hidden for one month. Within three blocks, we found 8 Americans whom the people had hidden from the Hemies, most of them from the 28th Division. We set up our machine guns covering a bridge and crossroads, and I put my squad in a bombed out house adjacent to the machine gun. That night Bob Houck, who came overseas as my gunner, worked up to S/Sgt. and then gave up his stripes, came in to get warm, tripped in a hole in the floor and fell on a broken bottle. He cut his wrist so badly that he eventually wound up in the states. They could not get a vehicle through to him to carry him out and he almost bled to death.

The Division Headquarters kitchen for the 28th Division was still standing on the Rue du Pont when the Germans overran the town in December 1944. Wiltz was on the main road to Bastogne and had to be taken as soon as possible.

January 22, 1945: Today, Eli Morris and I found 3 kegs of good beer in a tavern, which the owner gave us, and for the rest of the day, we drank beer and ate french fried potatoes. If it had not been for this, I might have seen Lee McCardell, war correspondent for the Baltimore Sun papers, who was outside taking pictures of my gun position. He was also hunting for four of us in the 2nd platoon from Baltimore, but was unable to find any of us. However, our battalion and some of the boys, received a nice write-up in the Baltimore paper, about the day's work.

January 23, 1945: This day was spent in reserve at Wiltz, where we rested up, shaved, took pictures and listened to American music on the phonograph. The people were friendly....

January 25, 1945: Today, it is the same old story—"ATTACK."

We had slept the night before in some old German dugouts in the middle of the woods. Because our entire platoon, about 30 men, were together in one place, guard duty was pulled for about one hour instead of the normal "1 On—1 Off" when in a foxhole with one other person. It was so cold (we estimated at 12 degrees below zero) that the men on guard duty found that their watches had stopped. (It was before modern day watches, remember).

We pushed off before daylight through 18 inches of snow. Our destination was Clervaux, Luxembourg. My 30 caliber heavy water-cooled machine gun squad consisted of a sergeant, a gunner, an assistant gunner, and 3 ammunition and water (or anti-freeze) bearers. The gunner carried a 51 lb. tripod on his back, the middle pod pointing down his back and the other two pods held in front by the soldier's arms. The assistant gunner carried a 36 lb. machine gun slung across one shoulder. The next soldier carried a water can (filled with anti-freeze) and one box of ammo. The last 2 soldiers had 2 ammo boxes each. As you can readily see, hiking in this fashion up and down ravines was a chore even without a war going on. We had been walking all day.

There was a full moon out that night and, as we were told Clervaux was close by, we slowed down, waiting for reports from the lead scouts. To our right, we were able to discern, in the early dawn, a large building with a pinkish color which turned out to be a monastery [the Abbey of St. Maurice].

Our machine gun platoon was attached to "B" Company, which is an infantry company of approximately 200 men. As we passed the monastery, the town of Clervaux came into sight below

us. It was eerie passing the walls of an unknown monastery, which could have harbored German soldiers.

Ciervaux is a resort town, set in the Ardennes Forest, close to the German border. It was one of President Franklin Roosevelt's favorite vacation spots. It sits astride a bend in the Clerve River in a deep, narrow basin formed by the merging of four precipitous wooded gorges with narrow streets framed by houses and shops with sharply pitched roofs and dominated by a chateau in the center of town.... It was here that the 110th Infantry Regiment of the 28th Division had stopped the Germans for three days at the beginning of the Bulge. It was on one of the main routes to Bastogne, which the Germans needed to capture as a key to supplying their army and tanks.

We spent the night in the basement of a beautiful church with my machine gun set up in the window in order to cover the gorge and road in case of a counterattack by the Germans. We were able to build a small fire, warm up our K-rations for supper, and keep reasonably warm. The church was located just above the chateau and on the same ridge leading to the monastery.

January 26, 1945: We worked our way down a wooded ridge into the town of Ciervaux and set up our machine guns to cover "B" Company riflemen who were going house to house cleaning out the town. We were situated about 300 feet higher than the bottom of the town, on a narrow ridge overlooking the town and the main road leading to the town of Marnach and the German border. Watching the road, which was very steep with many hair-pin turns while climbing out of the gorge, I observed through my binoculars German soldiers coming out of a small building and walking around on the road. It was obvious that they didn't know we were in town. At about the same time, a dozen more, apparently aware that we were in the town, started running up the road. Eli Morris, my gunner (who had been to Murmansk, Russia as a Merchant Seaman), opened fire with our machine gun. Intermittently, for the next hour, our platoon's four machine guns fired on the Germans as they fled up the road out of town.

January 27, 1945: The next morning, we found the Germans had pulled out. We made our way down to the chateau and, thence, into the main street of the town. The main road along the Clerve River was blocked by American and German tanks that had been knocked out on the 17th and 18th of December, at the beginning of the Bulge.

We made our way up the steep winding road and saw one dead German on the spot where more had been wounded by our machine gun fire. In another hour, we reached the outskirts of Marnach, which is on the "Skyline Drive" about 400 yards this side of the German border and the Our River. One of our lead scouts had been shot in the arm by a sniper and walked back by us for first aid. We moved up to support "B" Company, who were trying to enter the town. Sgt. Vinny Lohran and I fired our guns all afternoon, covering patrols moving in and out of Marnach. It was too well

defended for us to attack in daylight. As soon as it started to get good and dark, artillery fire was called for and a 15 minute battalion concentration, riddled one-half of the town, while we entered the other half. In trying to clear the town that night, "B" Company lost 3 men killed and a few wounded, all by machine guns and burp guns. I set my gun up in a barn, where we spent the night. (Eli Morris, my gunner, heard a noise in the hayloft and captured a German soldier in hiding). The Germans withdrew during the night and the front lines were at the same place where the Battle of the Bulge started on December 16, 1944.

THOMAS W. CLARKE

Company D, 101st Infantry, 26th Infantry Division, Third Army
York, Pennsylvania

Text and images from George S. Patton's Typical Soldier: A Memoir of Thomas W. (Wally) Clarke, Company D, 101st Infantry, 26th Division, Third Army, by Thomas W. Clarke, published by LifeReloaded. © 2013 Wally Clarke. Used by permission of the publisher. Purchase this book at LifeReloaded.com

WOUNDED BY HIS OWN TANK

IT WAS THE NIGHT OF DECEMBER 16, 1944 and M4 Sherman tank loader Private Frank Ario of Mankato, Minnesota, was asleep in a house near Aachen, Germany.

ALL OF A SUDDEN, there were flares lighting everything up like daylight. We were on the north, kind of on the edge of it [the Bulge]. We got orders, get out, and head for Belgium. It was so chaotic. I can't tell you what was going on in the minds of the officers. There was a lot of confusion, and it was night. The Germans were trying to get to Antwerp [Belgium] where the supplies for the American forces were coming in. [This was the German offensive

that began the Battle of the Bulge.] It completely floored us. How in the world could intelligence not know of that German buildup, when we had people coming back from that area telling everybody that the Germans had something going on?

...I was the loader for the 75mm gun. I sat on the left side of the turret. My job was to lift the 14 pound shells out of storage, slide them into the breech, lock it shut, and call out "On the way!"—and get out of the way, because the 13 inch recoil stopped only an inch from the back of the turret. The gunner would fire the cannon by stepping on a solenoid switch on the floor of the turret. That was supposed to be how it went. If the loader failed to get out of the way in time, he could be killed or seriously injured.

...We were sent to Malmedy [Belgium], on the way to Antwerp. Malmedy became infamous as the site of the massacre by

German troops of American GIs [on December 17, 1944]. We were only a mile away when it happened. We were lucky we weren't captured.

That day was a busy one. Once we got in place, we knocked



By the time Germany launched its Ardennes blitz, many GIs had sent home Christmas cards like this one from Private Frank Ario, a tank loader from Minnesota.

COURTESY OF JOE ARIO



COURTESY OF IOE, AIO

A painful run-in with a recoiling 75mm gun breech inside the turret of his M4 Sherman tank knocked Frank Ario out of action during the Bulge. By the time he returned from the hospital, his sergeant had been killed. Ario would make the Rhine River crossing into Germany in March 1945 with a different crew. Here he is (top right) with that new crew just before the crossing.

out six German vehicles that day. Then I saw what I thought was an anti tank gun. I hollered to [the tank's commander, Staff Sergeant Alexander P.] Oski and threw in a round. I was going to holler "On the way!" when the gun went off. Harland, the gunner, had his foot on the trigger. I got my shoulder caught. He felt really bad about it, but with so much going on, I understood how it happened.

...Sergeant Oski ordered me out of the tank to get some treatment. I ran to a house, having a bullet ricochet off my helmet on the way. A couple of infantry officers in the house directed me down the hill to a railroad depot, where there were some medics. They took my gun and put me in an ambulance to a hospital in Liège [Belgium]. Then they decided to send me to a hospital in Paris, where I spent three weeks. My shoulder was injured, and I had an unrelated ear infection. When I was released, I caught up with my outfit.

...While I was in the hospital, Sergeant Oski had been killed. On January 23, he had been riding along with his head outside the tank. An artillery shell hit near the Sherman, and Oski dropped into the turret, dead. It was a shame. He'd fought all that way. Oski and Leroy, my driver, had landed on D Day, with the first tanks to hit the shore. They were veterans, knowledgeable guys. Oski was tough. He did time in Stillwater [a state prison in

Bayport, Minnesota] for armed robbery. They gave him a choice: more jail or the army. It was comforting to have a commander like him. I had a decent relationship with him.

FRANK ARIO
private, 743rd Tank Battalion, with 30th Infantry Division
Minneapolis, Minnesota (deceased)

UNWELCOME GUESTS UPSTAIRS

PRIVATE FIRST CLASS ROBERT THOMPSON of Lansdowne, Pennsylvania, entered the war as a replacement, moving from the 69th Infantry Division to the 2nd Division. He landed on France's Normandy shore on July 22, 1944, to join the nerve-wracking battle through the region's ancient hedgerows. Then, after fighting in Brittany to liberate Brest, France, he moved with his 23rd Infantry Regiment to western Germany, where foxhole life soon gave him trench foot. He recovered and had settled into a pup tent near Elsenborn, Belgium, when the Battle of the Bulge broke out.

THE 23RD INFANTRY PITCHED PUP TENTS somewhere in the vicinity of Camp Elsenborn [in Belgium near the German border]. We were living above ground, recuperating from two and a half months of rest and Christmas packages were arriving much to our delight. This absolute euphoria lasted all of two nights! On

December 16th we were suddenly roused out of our brand new sleeping bags, put into trucks, and rushed to backup elements of the 99th Division which had come under a massive German attack.

It was an arduous trek as the roads were jammed with vehicles (ours) going in the wrong direction. Col. Hightower [Lieutenant Colonel John M. Hightower, commander of the 23rd's 1st Battalion] summed up the night's activities quite well and I quote: "The motor column with M.P. guides moved out at 2230 hours and was soon on the road to Büllingen [Belgium] where we were to receive our orders and meet our guides from the 99th Division's 394th Infantry Regiment, to whom we were now attached. We soon began to meet personnel and cargo trucks, artillery of all sizes, tanks and tank destroyers in large numbers on the road and all going the wrong way. At least they were not going the same way we were and I had the strange feeling that they were withdrawing. THEY WERE!"

"From time to time we had to pull over to the side of the road and stop until certain elements cleared us. I had an almost compelling urge to turn around and join them. I rejected that urge, however, because I was sure that [Colonel] Jay Lovless, my good friend and regimental commander, would kill me if I did. So, what the hell, let's go for the Germans. We reached Büllingen about midnight, found our guides and learned that the 99th Division had been under heavy attack, that the 394th Infantry could no longer hold its positions, and that we were to occupy backup positions which they had prepared earlier."

The position the second platoon was assigned to was an enigma to me. It appeared to be an anti-aircraft emplacement, or I should say an ex anti aircraft emplacement, with a large, maybe 20 foot diameter, saucer like hole suitable for an anti-aircraft artillery piece and surrounded by foxholes for infantry. The view from this emplacement was right down a long draw, an excellent defensive position providing we were not fogged in. The enigma I referenced was whether this was one of the positions prepared by the 99th Division or was it a position vacated by one of those outfits clogging the road on our way up there. All I could think of was the luxury we would have with a 90 millimeter ack ack in that hole pointed down that draw. As it was we were up there with our M-1 rifles and no support expected in the immediate future. The 23rd Regiment was committed at battalion strength and Col. Hightower was commander of the First Battalion, A, B, and C rifle companies plus D, the heavy weapons company. Our other two battalions were also in backup positions to the 99th Division but not in our area.

I failed to mention a farmhouse at the location and with no incoming fire we established it as our platoon HQ. The setup was this: We were backing up the 99th division with B and C compa-

nies side by side and A Company in reserve to the rear. Things were quiet, the 99th Division, our B Company and our C Company were all in front of us so most of us enjoyed a good night's (what was left of it) sleep in the farm house.

At 7 A.M. our company jeep driver and runner arrived from the Company CP [command post] with K-rations and some cheerful (?) news. "You know that town where we got off the trucks?" queried Meloney. "Yeah" piped someone. "Well" continued the runner, "It fell to a bunch of tiger tanks at dawn. We will have a wire down to you shortly. See you later."

The news caused little concern as we were more interested in those welcome rations he delivered. The weather was clear to some extent and we were able to observe, down that draw, some tanks running around. Suddenly they were attacked from the air and five were on fire. We learned that the tanks were German and the planes P-47s and I believe this was the last respite our air force enjoyed weather-wise since the usual overcast resumed in short order and all planes were grounded.

In the mid afternoon our farmhouse took a heavy mortar barrage and immediately upon lifting the chatter of burp guns [MP 40 sub-machine guns] (Kraut) echoed across the fields. There was a mad scramble for the nearest door or window as we headed to those ack ack emplacements on the double.

Miraculously everyone found shelter without a casualty.

The battle that followed was an exchange of small arms fire mixed with plenty of confusion. As it subsided to somewhat sporadic fire Byron Cooper was wounded, hit in the hand by a stray round and removed by ambulance. Now Byron was my assistant squad leader and I did not look forward to the future without him. (Fortunately for him his wound proved treatable and he rejoined in January.)

Later, we were on the receiving end of a heavy artillery attack and again we all survived but there was one very serious casualty—our phone line was bisected, trisected, whatever, but beyond repair.

It is now dark and our friend Meloney arrives again. He informs us that our position is untenable and the battalion is withdrawing in this manner: B Company and C

Company will withdraw through A Company, after which A Company will provide a small group to remain in place and pull off a round occasionally in hopes of fooling the Krauts into believing that we are still there. Somehow the job of providing this ruse fell on the second platoon.

We had no officer with us at this time, and with the above plan of action laid out, I suggested that Skagen (platoon sergeant but a little shy to speak up), Boomer (platoon guide), Holida and Donahoe (leaders of the second squad) plus myself, be a group of



In 1943, Robert L. Thompson was a trainee at Fort McClellan, Alabama. The next year, he sent this Christmas card from 2nd Division lines just before the Bulge.

Dec. 17 Sun. 5pm - Attacked + Separated from
Bn. During Withdrawal.

Dec. 18 - Hid out in basement of former
Bn. Hq. bldg. with Box & K rations.
Watched Jerry Tanks Roll By.

Dec. 19 - Jerries moved in our house
So we Waved The flag.

Walked Till Midnight - passed
Columns of Jerry vehicles
moving up. Slept in top floor
of a town hall - ate $\frac{1}{2}$ loaf
of bread plus honey + water.

Dec. 20 - Moved to a barn - bread
($\frac{1}{5}$ loaf) + honey, water for
lunch. Walked 4km. to
train - Rode all nite (40+).

Dec. 21 Left train 11 a.m. Walked
Deport - made personal
appearances in half a
dozen towns raising Civilian
morale. Finally stopped in
a town - searched, etc.

Slept in a Tannery - no food.
Dec. 22 Bread ($\frac{1}{5}$ loaf per) + a hunk
of liverwurst + then
walked over 20 km. to PW
camp at Bonn. Bowl of
poor tea (?) or something.

"JERRIES MOVED IN OUR HOUSE SO WE WAVED THE FLAG." With those words in his war diary, Robert L. Thompson recorded his capture on December 19, the fourth day of the Ardennes offensive. On the 16th, the first day of the Bulge, Thompson's regiment had been rushed forward to support the 99th Infantry Division, which was being pushed from inside Germany back toward Elsenborn, Belgium.

five to do the honors. There being no objections Jesus Arci, leader of the third squad, took the troops out with hopes of reconnecting with the rest of the battalion and regiment. The five of us began the "wait."

Later I fretted over my suggested selections of almost all the non-coms of the second platoon since it proved to be the end of the war for the five of us and with Byron Cooper being wounded left an immense leadership void for the platoon. However, it should not have been up to me to make that decision in the first place, just as it should not have been the responsibility of a T-5, Meloney, to be the one to lay out the night's plan for us.

Three factors entered into this very poor decision: (1) it was spur of the moment, little time for discussion, (2) we were so overconfident that this whole thing was a next-to-nothing and would blow over, and (3) the five selected were all veterans, dating to Normandy.

The plan also included a truck to be in Bullingen at 3 A.M. to take us out. Well, we waited and there was no action by the Krauts in the immediate area. B Company and C Company did not withdraw through A Company although we did pick up a straggler from each company so our group was now seven. We finally moved to Bullingen in time for our 3 A.M. rendezvous with a truck that never showed up. This was the night of Sunday, December 17, 1944, and we slept in the cellar of a home that for one reason or another we thought had been a former battalion headquarters and came complete with some K-rations!

There is a possibility we were in the wrong town, possibly Hunningen or even Murringen (each less than three miles from Bullingen). These three villages were very close together and we had never been in this part of Belgium and did not have the luxury of a map. Col. Hightower does mention "going to Hunningen to check on the companies." However, in my notes it was Bullingen, properly spelled and complete with the umlaut. The only place I could have come up with this was from a road sign. Well, whatever village we were in, we appeared to be alone on Sunday night (actually very early on Monday morning) and we got a little sleep.

During the day on Monday we were still totally oblivious to the magnitude of the situation as we made an attempt to orient but to no avail. It was so overcast that we could not determine where the sun would be if it was out. We did decide on the direction we would take but also decided that perhaps a night departure would be wiser and would also provide more time for our troops to return. We returned to the same house, ate some K-rations, and enjoyed a longer night's sleep.

On Tuesday, December 19th, we had no sooner finished a breakfast of more K-rations when a contingent of Krauts decided to move in upstairs. Obviously this created a tense situation because, had the situation been reversed and we had just moved in, a hand grenade would have been tossed down the cellar steps as an insurance policy.

Fortunately the Krauts did not think of such a vile action. We discussed quietly our predicament and decided it was in our best

interests to go upstairs and throw in the towel. Hoida and I put white cloths on the ends of BARs [Browning Automatic Rifles] and proceeded upstairs to the rear of a center hall. Two Krauts were eating their breakfast, sitting on the front doorstep with their backs to us. I cleared my throat, they looked around, their food went flying and they may still be running. We immediately called for the five in the cellar to come up and we took a perimeter defense utilizing seven windows and waited. Shortly a German officer about six foot five and thin as a rail, either very brave or very stupid, and with his pistol holstered, walked right up the front walk and asked if we wanted to surrender!!

Now what would have happened if we had ventilated this guy? One dead German for sure, but was an escape possible for us? Well I couldn't shoot him and no one else did so that was the end of the shooting war for us and a new chapter begun: Prisoner of War.

ROBERT L. THOMPSON

Company A, 1st Battalion, 23rd Infantry Regiment, 2nd Infantry Division
Honey Brook, Pennsylvania

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BATTLING GERMANS, COLD, AND FATIGUE

PRIVATE SAM F. LOEB was with the 99th "Checkerboard" Infantry Division on Elsenborn Ridge, a rise east of Elsenborn, Belgium, near the northern anchor of the bulging Ardennes line.

IT WAS ABOUT 10 DEGREES AT NIGHT there on Elsenborn Ridge. That was probably the worst part of the war—by myself at night, and most of the day in an icebox. Our winter gear was hopelessly inadequate for that climate. Standard army winter

clothing is an olive-drab uniform, with a wool knit cap, an overcoat, a field jacket, a sweater, wool knit gloves and, in some cases, a poncho. Shoes were combat boots with the wrong side of the leather out, which acted like a blotter. So many men suffered from the cold, trench foot, and hypothermia. We finally got overshoes. They shipped 15,000 pairs, but all in size nine. Fortunately, that's my size, so I could wear an overshoe over my boots. The guys who had big feet took their boots off and threw them away and wore overshoes during the winter. So when spring came, they didn't have any boots.

During the day, we were cowering in our foxholes. Occasionally the Germans attacked with tanks up the hill. Our artillery would drive them back. We sent out a few patrols, but the snow, of course, was so deep

and the visibility was bare. You just couldn't go anywhere. Night patrols went out, but they were not very energetic. Morale was terrible. Guys were fatigued. They were cold.

We were going on the attack before dawn on January 30, 1945. I was one of two platoon scouts. He and I started out around four



In Germany in the spring of 1945, Private First Class Sam F. Loeb has good reasons to smile. He has survived the Bulge, and the war in Europe is almost over.

SAM F. LOEB, COURTESY OF R.W. NORTON ART FOUNDATION

in the morning, breaking a path through drifts that were waist high. Each took turns breaking through the snow, and we'd go about 50 yards and then switch off. By daylight we were supposed to be inside the German position. Well, we were still stuck in snowdrifts when daylight came, and we were exposed on the hillside without artillery support because the regimental commander said: "My men don't need artillery support. We'll take them at night."

Well, we certainly didn't. Long story short, we came under machine gun fire. The other scout had just switched off with me when the firing broke out, and he was killed. I was 25 or 30 yards in front of everybody, and I fired off a clip, eight rounds, not knowing what I was aiming at. The guys behind me were hit. A 30-year man from the peacetime army was hit in the shoulder, and I watched him break into a big smile over his "million dollar wound." He had been trying to get out of combat ever since we arrived overseas.

I crawled back to the main line and the sergeant, knowing how exhausted I was, told me to go to the rear. I went back to the medical station where there were a lot of guys trying to get out of combat. A doctor asked me, "Are you a replacement?" I said, "No, I came over with the division." He said, "I tell you what I'll do. I'll let you rest for a while." So I went into a tent right beside a 105-millimeter battery, and crawled into a stack of blankets. I was totally exhausted, and slept 24 hours. I woke up with the battery firing and learned they had been firing for two or three hours. I got up and went back to the unit that had fallen back to our original departure point.

There were a lot of casualties, more from cold than anything else. The next day they gave us artillery support and we went back and took the area where we had started out originally. It was terrible leadership. Then we continued to advance to the Siegfried Line [the heavily fortified line guarding Germany's western border], where we started taking the pillboxes one by one.

When you first look at them, pillboxes are more formidable than they actually are. If you get around behind them and blow a door or crawl up and throw a grenade through the gun apertures, you can overcome them fairly easily. There were bunks and living quarters of different sizes, usually with 10 or 15 men inside. There were gun apertures and gun emplacements, usually machine guns, and they had a ventilation system.

The Germans arranged the pillboxes so each one could give covering fire to the other. So if you took one, it was sort of like a domino effect. You could get in close without the covering fire stopping your advance. We went into one particular pillbox with

a squad of 12 men and crawled down an observation trench. The man in front of me, Ned Goodnow, carried a BAR [Browning Automatic Rifle], and shot a German guard in the trench. We would crawl past each other. One would go, then the other....

We traded grenades with the Germans perhaps for 45 minutes. I lost track of time.... They'd open the door to the pillbox and toss a grenade out. We'd throw a grenade down. I had the satchel charge [explosives packed in a bag] but we couldn't get to the door because there was a machine gun outside the pillbox trained on the door. Normally you would run down the incline and pull the charge on the satchel, throw it against the door, and run back out, hoping you would get out before the charge went off.

A German threw a concussion grenade that went off between me and Goodnow. It made me goofy for a while. We failed in that attack, so they finally drew us back. If they had just put some mortar fire into the pillbox, it would have been all right. The captain brought us back into his pillbox and gave us some Scotch whiskey. Officers had a lot of liquor. They let us rest for a day and in the meantime another platoon took the pillbox, with one GI killed. Then we broke through most of the pillbox line and took them over and started living in them. There were bunks and blankets, and they were wonderful, but there was only one problem. The Germans had lice. So we were immediately covered with lice to the point where you could see them in your hair.

We stayed there a few days until the 69th Division, a green division, relieved us. They assigned me to guide a company in and take them to each of their platoon and squad locations, which were mostly in pillboxes. And then I could come out. So I was the last man in. In the platoon that relieved us was a lieutenant, a big strapping, football-player type, wearing freshly pressed clothes. I briefed him and he put his men in the pillbox. I said, "Lieutenant, there are snipers out here. You'd better keep undercover in the daytime." Well, I don't think he believed me. So he started climbing up on top of the pillbox, and I thought to myself, "To hell with this," and I started back. It was about dusk.

He took his binoculars out and as I went about 50 yards back towards the rear, I heard a single shot. I heard a body tumbling down. I never even turned around. That young lieutenant was on the line 5, maybe 10 minutes.

He took his binoculars out and as I went about 50 yards back towards the rear, I heard a single shot. I heard a body tumbling down. I never even turned around. That young lieutenant was on the line 5, maybe 10 minutes.



A hand wound put Sam F. Loeb in the hospital just before the Bulge fight began. He rejoined his 99th Infantry "Checkerboard" Division with the battle already in progress.

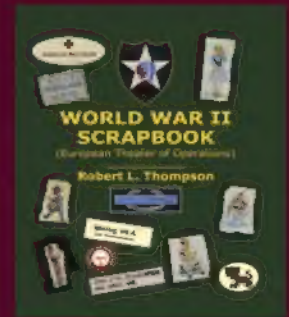
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SAM F. LOEB

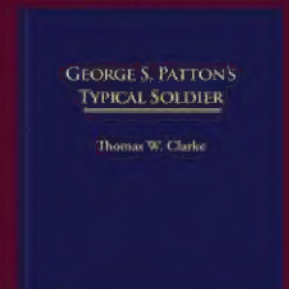
platoon scout, Headquarters Company, 2nd Battalion,
393rd Infantry Regiment, 99th Infantry Division
Shreveport, Louisiana



Featured Books



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Create a Legacy

My Dad was one of the pioneers of commercial aviation in Australia. Arthur Lovell gained his pilot's license in 1935 and he navigated the Australia trans-continental air route in the days when you plotted your course shooting the stars with a sextant and doing calculations with a book of log tables.

He was commissioned as a Flying Officer in the Royal Australian Air Force during WW II and he flew secret supply missions in the C-47 (Dakota) out of Daly Waters in Northern Australia into the Pacific

Theater—Philippines, New Guinea, Coral Sea, Singapore and Malaya.

My Dad died in 1994.

Ten years later it was time for my Mom to leave the family home that she had maintained on her own with such great determination.

Now it fell to the next generation to pick up the loose ends and sort through the bits-and-pieces of a lifetime.

Box after box, until I never wanted to see another cardboard box again!

And—suddenly—here was something totally new! My Dad's logbooks, photos and reminiscences about his flying career of over 20,000 hours. No one in the family even knew they were there.

What do you do with this stuff?

In 2004 I founded LifeReloaded Specialty Publishing. Our specialty is working with authors and families who have cardboard boxes of "stuff" and a great story they want to tell.

It was a great privilege for me to be able to create this wonderful legacy for my own Dad and for our family.—Mike Lovell, founder LifeReloaded Specialty Publishing.



To learn more about how LifeReloaded Specialty Publishing can help with your project visit our website or call to arrange a free consultation.

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BATTLE OF THE BULGE

PARTING SHOT



ARMY SIGNAL CORPS PHOTO, NATIONAL ARCHIVES

True coffee-lovers find solutions and workarounds for any and all obstacles that dare to block access to the hot, bitter liquid that makes life tolerable. For Staff Sergeant Harold J. Sloan of Akron, Ohio, a 101st Airborne Division Screaming Eagle roughing it in Foy, Belgium, near Bastogne, the obstacle on January 11, 1945, was clean water. But when the yen for a hot cup of java struck him, he took a look around and noticed that he was surrounded by clean water: the frozen kind, better known as snow. So, he grabbed his canteen cup, walked to the nearest pine tree, and harvested his coffee water.



A Very Merrie Christmas and a Happy New Year.

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